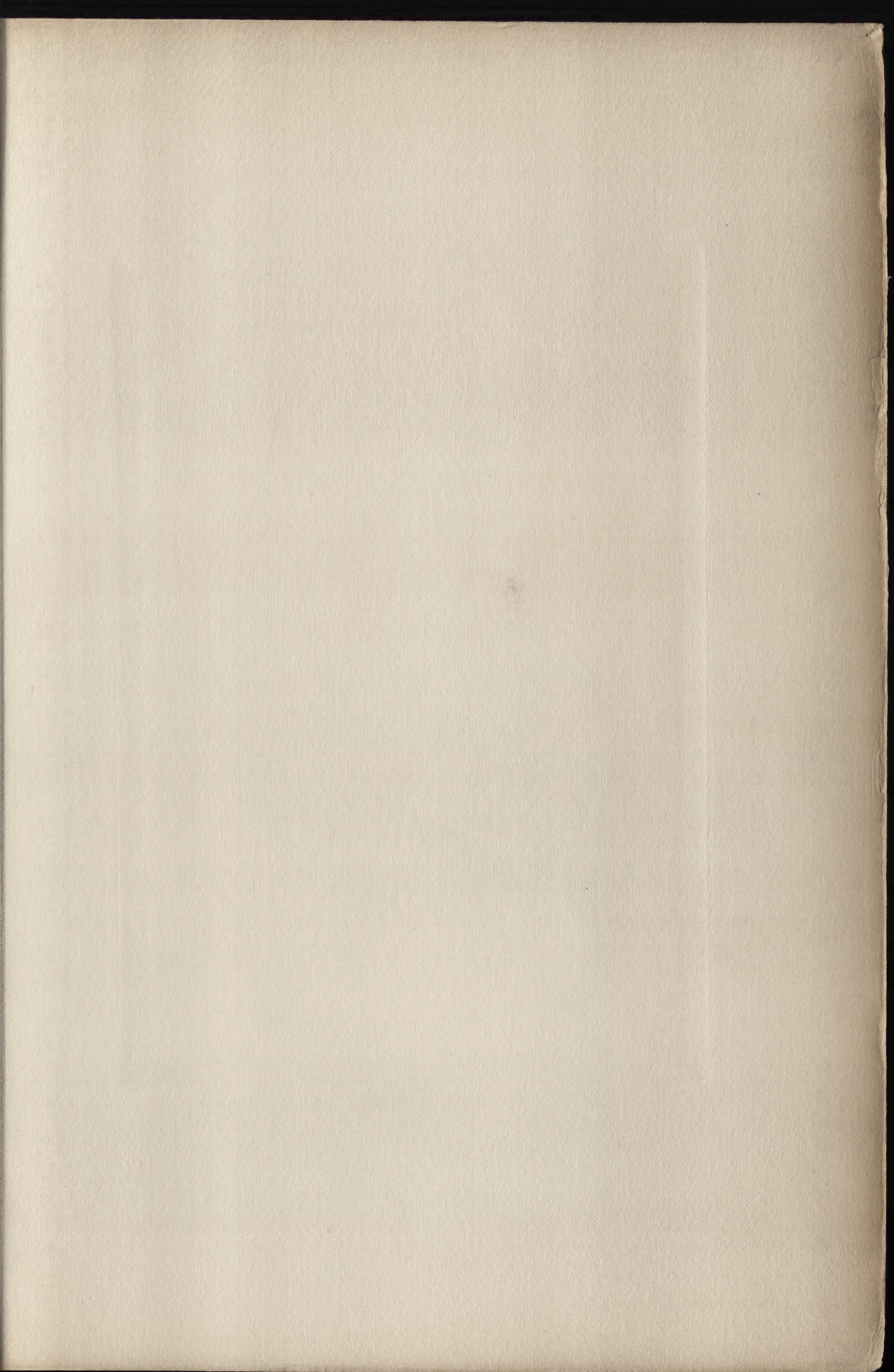


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THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH





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THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

A RECORD OF HIS LIFE AND WORKS

BY MRS ARTHUR BELL (N. D'ANVERS)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS REPRODUCED FOR

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1897

P R E F A C E

OWING to the fact that Gainsborough seldom signed his work, set little store by it, and gave it away with reckless generosity, it is far more difficult to trace his pictures than those of any of his contemporaries. Yet they, fortunately, one and all bear the impress of an individuality so unique that the connoisseur when brought face to face with them is rarely at fault. Their peculiar technique, moreover, is such that the engraver has almost insurmountable difficulty, and only by the direct process of reproduction is it possible to give the subtle qualities of the originals. While the most celebrated of the artist's masterpieces are here represented, the publishers have not been content to remain on the beaten track only, but have been at considerable trouble in tracing out many specimens of characteristic work, hitherto unknown to the public. To the owners of these they are indebted for the generous courtesy with which they have granted the necessary permission to reproduce the priceless treasures in their possession. Their hearty thanks are specially due to the Duke of Westminster, K.G. (for "The Blue Boy"), Earl Spencer, K.G. (for the portraits of the Duchess of Westminster and Countess Spencer); Lord Tweedmouth; Mr Wertheimer (for the portrait of Charles Frederick Abel); Rev. Edward Gardiner; Mrs Pym; to the governing body of Christchurch, Oxford (for the portraits of David Garrick, Hon. Walter Ellis, and Sir John Skinner); to Mr H. P. Horne, the author of the catalogue of engraved portraits by Gainsborough, for permission to reproduce some of his rare mezzotints; and to Mr Herbert P. Horne, his nephew, who owns several most interesting drawings and water-colour sketches, three of which are here reproduced; and lastly, to Messrs Christie, for much kindness and information.

If the tracing of the work of Gainsborough has been

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

difficult, no less onerous has been the task of getting together trustworthy material for his biography. A man of singularly attractive personality no doubt he was, but one who hated the pen as much as he loved the brush, and who, like many an artist of the present day, would do anything to oblige a friend rather than write him a letter. The actual words, therefore, of the great painter are so few, and, according to his present biographer, so little worthy in themselves of the immortality conferred on them by the fame of their author, that it could only be by the diligent study of the lives of those of his contemporaries with whom he came into personal contact that anything like a true insight into his character could be obtained. Mrs Arthur Bell, who, as the author of a well-known History of Art, may claim to possess the necessary qualification, was chosen to undertake the task, and it is hoped that the result will be found satisfactory. She has certainly collected a vast amount of hitherto undigested material, and brought out in a way not perhaps hitherto done the individuality of the many-sided subject of this memoir.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	I
CHAPTER	
I. THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH AS A BOY AT SUDBURY— 1727-1742	7
His Parents—His Brothers and Sisters—His School Days—His Earliest Sketches and First Portrait.	
II. FIRST VISIT TO LONDON—1742-1746	13
London in 1742—Gainsborough under Gravelot—At St Martin's Academy and under Hayman—As an Independent Worker in Hatton Garden—Gainsborough's Probable Amusements—His Resolve to Return to Sudbury.	
III. SHORT STAY AT SUDBURY, AND MARRIAGE—1745	19
Enthusiastic Welcome Home—Early Landscape Work—The Great Cornard Wood—The Influence of Wynants—First Meeting with Miss Burr—Her Reputed Parentage—Marriage and Removal to Ipswich.	
IV. THE GAINSBOROUGHS AT IPSWICH—1745-1760	24
Meeting with Joshua Kirby—Mr Kilderbee and the Hingestons —Birth of Gainsborough's Daughters—An Early Portrait— First Meeting with Thicknesse—Landscape Painted for Him —Portrait of Wolfe.	
V. EARLY WORK AT BATH—1760-1762	35
Bath in 1760—Beau Nash—Gainsborough's Quarrel with Thick- nesse—Vandyck and His Influence over Gainsborough— First Public Exhibition of Pictures in London—Portraits of Lord Nugent, Lady Montagu, Richardson, and Sterne.	

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

CHAPTER

PAGE

V. (*continued*). GAINSBOROUGH'S MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC FRIENDS AT BATH

47

Gainsborough's Love of Music and the Drama—Portraits of Abel—Gainsborough's Attempts at Modelling—Giardini—Fischer—Various Portraits of Eliza Linley—James Quin—Gainsborough's Five Portraits of David Garrick—Attempted Portrait of Shakespeare—Samuel Foote.

VI. LATER WORK AT BATH—1762-1767

61

Portrait of Mr Poyntz—Of Countess Spencer—The Duchess of Devonshire as a Child, and in Later Life—Arrival at Bath of Gainsborough Dupont—Landscapes, probably Painted at Bath between 1762-1769—Sir Joshua Reynolds' Judgment on Them—The Harvest Waggon—Mr Wiltshire—Rural Courtship—Pictures Inherited by Mr Gardiner—Portraits of Lady Grosvenor, the Duke of Argyll, Lord Frederick M. Campbell, the Duke and Duchess of Montagu, and of Captains Needham and Hervey.

VII. LAST FEW YEARS AT BATH

70

Foundation of the Royal Academy—First Exhibition—Portrait of Lord Chesterfield—Gainsborough's Works at the 1770 Exhibition—Benjamin West and His "Death of Wolfe"—Later Landscapes by Gainsborough—Portraits of Miss Tyler, Mrs Macaulay, Mrs Elliot, Lord Camden, and Chatterton.

VIII. RETURN TO LONDON

82

Arrival at Schomberg House—Political Situation in 1774—Great Contemporary Authors and Celebrated Singers—Prince Orloff, James Bruce, and Omiah—Revolution in English Art—Scheme for Decoration of St Paul's—Landscape Painters and their Position in 1774—Exhibition of 1774—Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds—Abel, Garrick, and Fischer again—Death of Humphrey and Marriage of Mary Gainsborough.

IX. GAINSBOROUGH'S ARISTOCRATIC PATRONS IN LONDON .

92

Lord Bateman and Sir George Beaumont—Gainsborough's Summons to Buckingham Palace—His First Portraits of the King, Queen, and Princesses—Gainsborough's Final Quarrel with the Academy—First Portrait of the Prince of Wales—Portrait Group of the Prince, Mrs Fitzherbert, Sheridan, and Lord Radnor—Portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland—The Duchess of Gloucester and her Daughters: The Ladies Waldegrave—Various Portraits of Great Nobles—Later Portraits of the Duchess of Devonshire—Portraits of Sir George Sackville, Lord Gage, and Lady Maynard.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

PAGE

X. PORTRAITS OF GREAT STATESMEN 104

Various Likenesses of the Second Pitt—Portraits of Edmund Burke and of Charles James Fox—Later Portraits of Richard Brinsley Sheridan—Portraits of Robert Lord Clive, Lord North, Dr Benjamin Franklin, William Wyndham, and of George Canning as a Young Man.

XI. LATER PORTRAITS OF AUTHORS, ACTORS, AND ARTISTS 109

Portraits of Dr Johnson, Paul Whitehead, Arthur Murphy, and Sir Henry Bate Dudley, Editor of the *Morning Post*—Portraits of Mrs Siddons, Mrs Yates, George Coyte, and Bessy Brunton—Richard Louthenbourg and his Movable Pictures—Gainsborough's Imitations of them—Portrait of Benjamin West—West's Influence on Art in England.

XII. MISCELLANEOUS PORTRAITS PAINTED IN LONDON . 115

Portraits of Bishop Hurd, the Bishop of Ferns, the Rev. Dr Ashton, and the Rev. Richard Graves—Portraits of Sir William Blackstone, Sir John Skinner, Lord Chief Baron, Edward Willes and Judge Perrin—Portraits of Lord Hood, Lord Rodney, and Admiral Howe—Portraits of Colonel Tarleton, General Conway, and Colonel St Leger—The Hell-Fire Club—Peter Pindar's Satire on the Portraits of Colonel St Leger and the Prince of Wales—The "Blue Boy," and why it was Painted—Portrait of Lady Emma Hamilton—Portraits of Various Private Persons—Gainsborough's Weariness of Portrait Painting.

XIII. LATER LANDSCAPES AND SUBJECT-PICTURES . . . 120

Gainsborough's Visits to the Lakes and to Worcestershire—The Large Landscape of 1777—"The Woodman in a Storm"—"The Girl and Pigs"—Gainsborough's Few Sea-pieces—Unsuccessful Exhibition at Schomberg House—Visit to Sudbury and Sensation made there—"The Shepherd Boy in a Shower"—Various Pictures of Jack Hill—His Adoption by Gainsborough—Allan Cunningham's Criticism of Gainsborough's Landscapes with Children—The "Musidora" of the National Gallery—"The Ladies Walking in the Mall."

XIV. LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH 127

Glimpses of Gainsborough's Home-Life during His Last Years—His Mode of Painting—His Daughter Margaret—His Pre-sentiment of Coming Death—The Trial of Warren Hastings—Supposed Chill Taken by Gainsborough at the Trial—Farewell Interview with Sir Joshua Reynolds—His Death and Funeral—Sale of His Pictures at Schomberg House.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

CHAPTER

PAGE

XV. CONTEMPORARY AND MODERN CRITICISM . . . 137

Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourse on Gainsborough—Constable's Opinion of His Landscape Work—The Verdict of Ruskin—Redgrave's Appreciation of Gainsborough as a Landscape Painter—Brock-Arnold's Criticism of the Critics—Walter Armstrong's Indifference to Gainsborough's Landscapes—His Comparison of Gainsborough as a Portrait Painter with Sir Joshua Reynolds—A Dramatic Critic on Gainsborough's Work—The "Mrs Siddons" and "Mrs Beaufoy" compared—Conclusion.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAITS.

LADY MULGRAVE, <i>from the painting formerly in the Price Collection</i>	Front.
PORTRAIT OF GAINSBOROUGH (by JOHN ZOFFANY), <i>from the original in the National Gallery</i>	FACE PAGE 1
A YOUNG GIRL, <i>from the painting owned by the Rev. EDWARD GARDINER</i>	28
GENERAL WOLFE, <i>from the painting owned by Mrs PYM</i>	34
ORPIN, THE PARISH CLERK OF BRADFORD, WILTS., <i>from the painting in the National Gallery</i>	42
CHARLES FREDERICK ABEL, <i>from the painting owned by Mr CHARLES WERTHEIMER</i>	48
SAMUEL LINLEY, R.N., <i>from the painting at Dulwich Gallery</i>	50
MRS SHERIDAN AND MRS TICKELL, <i>from the painting at the Dulwich Gallery</i>	52
MRS SHERIDAN, <i>from the mezzotint by Gainsborough Dupont</i>	54
MARGARET GEORGIANA, FIRST COUNTESS SPENCER, <i>from the painting owned by EARL SPENCER, K.G.</i>	62
GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE, <i>from the painting owned by EARL SPENCER, K.G.</i>	64
GAINSBOROUGH'S TWO DAUGHTERS, <i>from the unfinished painting owned by the Rev. EDWARD GARDINER</i>	66
GAINSBOROUGH'S NEPHEW (a study for a "Blue Boy"), <i>from the painting owned by the Rev. E. GARDINER</i>	68
THE HON. AUGUSTUS HERVEY (afterwards Earl of Bristol), <i>from the mezzotint by JAMES WATSON</i>	68
DOROTHEA, LADY EDEN, <i>from the painting formerly owned by Sir JULIAN GOLDSMID</i>	72
DAVID GARRICK, <i>from the painting at Christchurch, Oxford</i>	74
DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND, <i>from a photograph by Messrs BRAUN of the painting in the Royal Collection</i>	76

The Titles in Capitals denote photogravure plates.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

	FACE
MRS ELLIOTT, <i>from the mezzotint by JOHN DEAN</i>	PAGE 78
MR AND MRS DEHANEY AND THEIR DAUGHTER, <i>from the painting formerly owned by Sir JULIAN GOLDSMID</i>	82
MRS MOODEY AND HER CHILDREN, <i>from the painting at the Dulwich Gallery</i>	84
VISCOUNT MOUNTMORRES, <i>from the painting formerly in the Price Collection</i> .	86
MRS BUCHANAN M'MILLAN, <i>from the painting formerly in the Price Collection</i>	88
THE HON. WELBORE ELLIS, <i>from the painting at Christchurch, Oxford</i> .	90
THE ROYAL PRINCESSES, DAUGHTERS OF GEORGE III., <i>from a photograph by Messrs BRAUN of the painting in the Royal Collection</i>	92
H.M. GEORGE III., <i>from a photograph by Messrs BRAUN of the painting in the Royal Collection</i>	94
QUEEN CHARLOTTE, <i>from a photograph by Messrs BRAUN of the painting in the Royal Collection</i>	96
MRS FITZHERBERT, <i>from a photograph of the painting by J. CASWALL SMITH</i>	98
GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES, <i>from a photograph by Messrs BRAUN of the painting in the Royal Collection.</i>	98
DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND, <i>from the mezzotint by V. GREEN</i>	100
PRINCESS MARIE, DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER, <i>from a photograph by Messrs BRAUN of the picture in the Royal Collection</i>	100
GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE, <i>from a wood engraving of the lost picture</i>	102
JOHN PALMER, M.P., <i>from the painting formerly in the Price Collection</i> .	104
LADY CLARGES, <i>from the painting formerly in the Price Collection</i>	108
SIGNORA GIOVANNI BACELLI, <i>from the mezzotint by JOHN JONES</i>	112
MRS SIDDONS, <i>from a photograph by the Autotype Company of the painting in the National Gallery</i>	112
THE HON. MRS GRAHAME, <i>from a photograph by the Autotype Company of the painting in the National Scottish Portrait Gallery</i> .	114
SIR JOHN SKINNER, <i>from the painting at Christchurch, Oxford</i>	116
MASTER JONATHAN BUTTALL (THE BLUE BOY), <i>from the painting owned by the DUKE OF WESTMINSTER, K.G.</i>	118
THE HON. MRS WATSON, <i>from the mezzotint by THOMAS PARK</i>	118

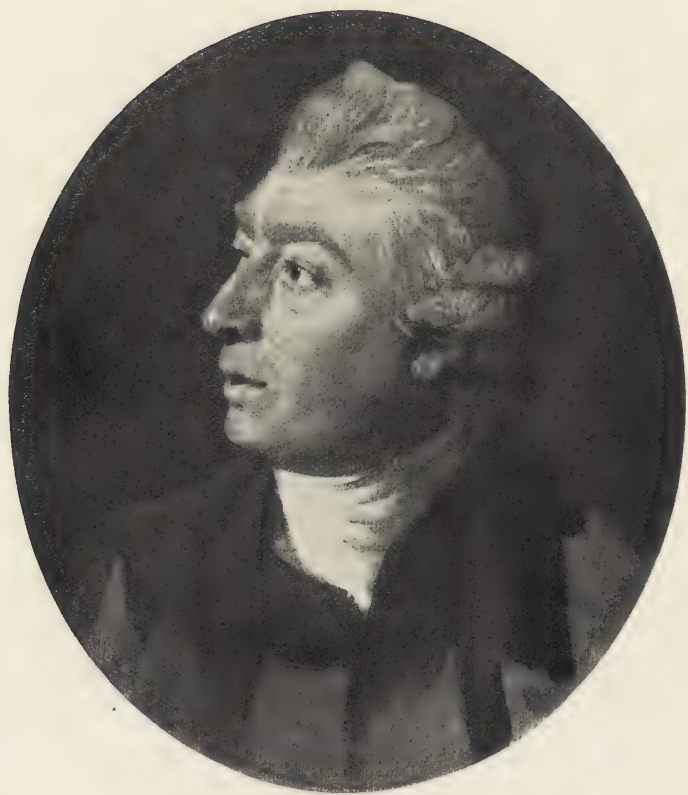
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

SUBJECT-PICTURES.

	FACE
HEN AND CHICKENS, <i>from a sketch owned by the Rev. EDWARD GARDINER</i> .	PAGE 66
LAD WITH A WHIP, <i>from a pencil sketch owned by Mr EDWARD BELL</i> .	72
COTTAGE CHILDREN, <i>from the mezzotint by H. BIRCHE</i> . . .	80
A SHEPHERD, <i>from the mezzotint by RICHARD EARLOM</i> . . .	120
MUSIDORA, <i>from the painting in the National Gallery</i> . . .	124
BOYS AND DOGS, <i>from the mezzotint by H. BIRCHE</i> . . .	136
THE LITTLE COTTAGER, <i>from the mezzotint by CHARLES TURNER</i> . .	138
INTERIOR OF A COTTAGE, <i>from the mezzotint by CHARLES TURNER</i> . .	142

LANDSCAPES.

LANDSCAPE, <i>from an etching on pewter owned by the Rev. E. GARDINER</i> .	12
LANDSCAPE, <i>from an etching on pewter owned by the Rev. E. GARDINER</i> .	13
LANDSCAPE, <i>from an etching on pewter owned by the Rev. E. GARDINER</i> .	14
LANDSCAPE, <i>from a drawing owned by Mr HERBERT P. HORNE</i> . .	16
LANDSCAPE, <i>from a drawing owned by Mr HERBERT P. HORNE</i> . .	18
LANDSCAPE, <i>from a drawing owned by Mr HERBERT P. HORNE</i> . .	20
LANDSCAPE (REPOSE), <i>from the painting formerly in the Price Collection</i>	22
LANDGUARD FORT, <i>from the engraving by T. MAJOR</i> . . .	32
THE HARVEST WAGGON, <i>from the painting owned by LORD TWEEDMOUTH</i> .	64
LANDSCAPE (EVENING), <i>from the painting formerly in the Price Collection</i> .	122
GRAND LANDSCAPE, <i>from the painting formerly owned by Sir Julian Goldsmid, M.P.</i>	140



PORTRAIT OF THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A.,
BY JOHN ZOFFANY, R.A.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

INTRODUCTION

THE year 1727, during which the future landscape and portrait painter, Thomas Gainsborough, was born at the little town of Sudbury, in Suffolk, was an eventful one for England, for it was that of the accession to the throne of George II., a monarch so thoroughly German in his sympathies that, but for the vigorous opposition of the great peace Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, the interests of England would have been ruthlessly sacrificed to those of Hanover. The Spanish guns were thundering against Gibraltar with the connivance of the Emperor Charles VI., who had promised to aid in wresting that stronghold and Minorca from England in return for aid in enforcing the European consent to the succession of his daughter Maria Theresa. The whole political world of the Continent was in a ferment of agitation; and nothing but the strong hand of Walpole at the helm kept England from being involved in the ruinous struggle.

During the sixty-one years of Gainsborough's life took place that bloodless but intensely important revolution in England which broke the power of the monarch and laid the foundations of the constitutional government now so firmly established and so deeply rooted in the affections of the people. George II., who became, under the strong domination of Walpole, little more than the figure-head of the vessel of the State, was succeeded by his grandson, George III. The powerful enforcer of peace, Sir Robert Walpole, was replaced by the great organiser of wars and dictator of terms, William Pitt, later Earl of Chatham, to be succeeded in his turn by men less able, but who, through all the convulsions at home and struggles abroad, carried on the mighty work inaugurated by Walpole—the winning of freedom for the subject. During Gainsborough's life the last hopes of the Stuarts were finally crushed by the defeat of the Pre-

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

tender at Culloden ; the Seven Years' War began and ended ; Clive's victory at Plassey laid the foundations of the English power in the East ; General Wolfe won Canada by his victory at Quebec ; the war of American Independence, thanks to the short-sighted policy of Lord North and the obstinate interference of George III., which was the final death-blow alike to his own influence and that of his successors, lost England her greatest dependency, and checked for a time her commercial supremacy ; Sir Ralph Abercrombie defeated the French in Egypt and sowed the first seeds of France's jealousy of England's influence on the Nile ; Sir John Moore retrieved the fortunes of the British forces at Corunna ; and the foundations of Great Britain's naval supremacy were laid when the Dutch fleet was defeated by Lord Duncan, and the Spanish by Lord Rodney. Gainsborough died on the eve of the French Revolution : in the year during which George III. was first declared insane, when the second Pitt was Prime Minister. Napoleon, then seventeen years old, was serving as a sub-lieutenant of artillery, Wellington had just received his first commission as an ensign in the 73rd Foot, and Nelson was vainly suing for employment after his return from service in the West Indies.

During the same eventful time the invention of the steam-engine by Watt, and of the spinning-frame by Arkwright, with the discoveries of Davy, Smeaton, Brindley, and others in chemistry and engineering, effected as complete a modification in the social life of the masses as the change in the principles of government had done in politics. When Gainsborough was born life and property were alike insecure ; injustice and robbery were rife even in high places ; the smallest misdemeanours of the lower classes were punished in a barbarous manner by mutilation, by death, or even by both. Prisoners were still tortured to make them confess their crimes, real or imaginary ; neither age nor sex was exempted from the utmost rigour of a corruptly administered law, and it was no uncommon thing for mere children to be hung for the trivial offence of robbing an orchard or stealing a loaf of bread. Real liberty of conscience, of speech, or of action were, in fact, as yet undreamt of ; but before the painter's death many most important and beneficent changes were inaugurated. Public opinion was becoming a power in the land : several newspapers, forerunners of the *Times*, which was founded in the year of Gainsborough's

INTRODUCTION

death, did much to aid the cause of justice, by throwing light upon the various forms of oppression in vogue ; and on every side were signs of the dawn of that liberty which is now the proudest boast of every British subject. Whitefield, Wesley, and others were aiding, by their preaching, to reform the morals of the people ; Howard had obtained the redress of the worst abuses in the prisons of his native country ; whilst Clarkson, Sharp, and Wilberforce had begun their twenty years' crusade against slavery.

In the world of literature, as in that of politics and of science, many great stars arose and set during Gainsborough's career. Samuel Johnson was just beginning to attract notice by his Latin translations in the year the artist was born, and died three years before him ; Oliver Goldsmith, one year younger than Gainsborough, was cut off in the prime of life in 1774, when his great contemporary was at the zenith of his fame ; Fielding's first comedy was produced in Drury Lane when Gainsborough was a year old ; Cowper, though he was four years younger than the artist and survived him sixteen years, had produced all his best work and sunk into imbecility before 1788. In 1727 Richardson was still a mere scribbler for the newspapers, his "Pamela" not having been produced till 1740 ; Sterne, a lad of fourteen when Gainsborough was born, did not issue the book which made his reputation till he was fifty ; Chatterton, the brilliant meteor who flashed so rapidly across the literary firmament to be quenched in early dissolution, was born whilst Gainsborough was still a struggling painter at Ipswich, and died before the great artist had reached the acme of his fame ; Gray, with whose quiet descriptions of rural scenery the landscapes of Gainsborough had some affinity, was producing his immortal works of classic style, but truly English sentiment, when the Suffolk painter was just beginning his career ; Burns was the idol of Scotland and of England throughout the whole of Gainsborough's career ; and the mystery of Dean Swift's connection with "Stella" was still being eagerly canvassed in literary circles when the young neophyte first came to London.

In striking contrast with the intense and fevered political and literary activity of the eighteenth century, not only in England, but throughout Europe, was the decline of all true art production. In Italy, the land so long prolific of painters of real genius, not a single name of note rises above the dead level of uniform mediocrity : for Canaletto, Guardi,

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

and Zuccherelli, though they won considerable renown, were essentially common-place; in Spain, Goya alone to some extent sustained the great traditions bequeathed by Velasquez; whilst in France, after the death of Watteau in 1721, the works of Chardin and Greuze were the only productions to light up the general gloom. David, the inaugurator of the classic revival which, eagerly hailed though it was by the art critics, gave in truth the death-blow to originality, was not born till Gainsborough was twenty years old; and in Germany, as later in France, classicism smothered native genius, Raphael Mengs, one year younger than Gainsborough, and others like him having by their cold eclecticism revived the form without the spirit of the antique. In Belgium not one successor of Van Dyck, who had deserted his native country for England, arose; and in Holland William Kalfs, the painter of kitchen pieces, Jan Weenix, the renderer of dead game, with Van Huysum, the skilful interpreter of flower-life, were the only heirs of the various and mighty Dutch schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Now, strange to say, it was in England—cold, damp, and dreary England, where, according to French critics, the sun never shines and colour is unknown—that the great modern revival of the art of painting took place, and that new life was born which, as E. von Schegel so forcibly says, could only spring from the depths of a new love. Neither hallowed nor hampered by the traditions of the past, the soil of England was still absolutely virgin, and the seed once sown bore fruit a hundredfold. The great part played by artists of British nationality in the history of modern painting has only lately been recognised, even by English writers, and it took long indeed to convert Continental critics from their long-cherished opinion that no good thing could come out of the sea-girt northern island.

It is remarkable that, although, since the researches of Darwin and of Wallace first called public attention to the subject of evolution, the theory of gradual development from an original type has been applied to pretty well every branch of science, of politics, of religion and of morals, of facial expression, and even of dress, no writer has yet attempted seriously to trace the evolution of art or of artists. History after history of art has of course been written, and often misplaced efforts have been made to assign to each art-worker a place in some

INTRODUCTION

school ; but this is no true tracing of evolutionary development. Grant Allen, the one exception to this rule, has indeed published some ingenious and interesting essays on the evolution of the subjects of pictures, but in so doing he has only skimmed the surface of what, were there such a thing as real art evolution, would be an inexhaustible mine of wealth.

The reason of this silence would really appear to be that there is in fact no such thing as hereditary genius amongst artists or heredity in matters of art, but that each exponent of the ideal received, and still receives, the divine spark of inspiration direct from a higher power as the result of a separate creative act ; a separate emanation from the source of all life.

Nowhere is this truth, if truth it be, more forcibly illustrated than in the history of the British school of painting. Until the eighteenth century, art was practised in England exclusively by foreigners. "Art," to quote the words of the ardent young Reynolds himself, in whose heart and mind, though he knew it not, the divine spark was already kindled, "was at its lowest ebb: it could not indeed have been lower"; yet first one and then another genius of British birth arose, all totally unconnected with each other, and not one of them of descent from men who had made any mark in the art world; although, perhaps, they may have inherited some little talent from the female side. Hogarth, the Fielding of the pencil and the brush, who used his dramatic power chiefly as a moral weapon against vice, yet in his portraits and many of his subject-pictures showed intense sympathy with, and insight into, human nature, was the son of a schoolmaster who eked out a scanty livelihood as a printer's reader and corrector for the press ; Richard Wilson, who, in spite of the poetic beauty of his work, was never fully appreciated by his contemporaries, was the son of a clergyman innocent of any special feeling for art ; Allan Ramsay, the sympathetic and truthful portrait painter, was the son of the little-known poet, who produced the pastoral drama of the "Gentle Shepherd"; Romney, who was thought by his contemporaries to be the equal of Reynolds and of Gainsborough, was the son of a cabinet-maker ; Raeburn, best of all the early painters of Scotland, whose portraits rival those of Reynolds in truth to nature and grace of execution, was the son of an Edinburgh manufacturer ; Wright of Derby, most successful of the secondary portrait painters of the century, was the son of an attorney ; Reynolds,

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

the prince of England's portrait painters, was the son of a clergyman, and, though one of a very large family, had not a single relative with any bias for art; whilst Gainsborough's early associations were all with trade, for his father was a maker of cloth and of the woollen shrouds then used for burial in England.

Not only was there apparently nothing to lead up to the appearance of this galaxy of great painters: the time during which they flourished was one which would at first glance appear to have been actually hostile to the practice of any such gentle craft as that of painting, for, as has been pointed out above, England was in the throes of a political revolution, when those at the helm of the State were taxed to the uttermost to save her from shipwreck amongst the many rocks ahead. The eighteenth century was a transition period, when the hostility of the labouring and manufacturing classes was roused against the introduction of the steam-engine and the spinning-wheel superseding the work of the handicraftsman. It was an ugly time in more senses than one: when picturesqueness of costume was dying out, when houses and furniture were losing the old romantic beauty which had distinguished the reign of the Stuarts; scarcely an architect except the brothers Adam; scarcely a designer of furniture except Chippendale; scarcely a book illustrator, for Bewick was not born until 1760, lit up the general gloom of a period so apparently unsuitable for the fostering of the ethereal germ of original art production. Yet that germ did take root, now here, now there, without any apparent fostering, and under the most adverse circumstances, till at last the reluctant admiration of the hardest to convince was won: first Hogarth, then Reynolds, Wilson, and Gainsborough effecting a complete revolution in the art of painting.

Beauty of form and of colour, nervous force and originality of sentiment replaced the lifeless plagiarism of the past. Faithful presentments of living men and women moving in modern English society, of real peasants toiling or resting in actual English landscapes, of happy children playing in the open air, superseded the classic groves haunted by the heroes and heroines of ancient fables. Art was brought home at last, not only to the palace, but to the cottage, and became a powerful engine for good with its vivid illustrations of contemporary life, its acute accentuation of deep moral truths.

Chapter I.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH AS A BOY AT SUDBURY—1727-1742.

HIS PARENTS—HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS—HIS SCHOOL DAYS—
HIS EARLIEST SKETCHES AND FIRST PORTRAIT.

THE family to which Thomas Gainsborough belonged was of the sturdy middle-class, which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by its unflinching resistance to the usurpations of the Crown and the encroachments of the aristocracy, did so much to win for England the liberty of conscience now so little regarded because so universal throughout the widespread British Empire. The Gainsboroughs were in every sense of the term "Independents," belonging to that sect of Christians who claimed "that every congregation has a right to elect its own officers, manage its own affairs, and stand independent of all authority saving that of the Supreme and Divine Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Mr and Mrs Gainsborough, the parents of the subject of this memoir, lived at the quaint old town of Sudbury, in Suffolk, once under the name of Southburgh, distinguishing it from Northburgh, the modern Norwich, the seat of a little colony of Flemish weavers, driven to England in the reign of Edward III. by religious persecution, who not only taught the natives their art, but by intermarrying with them, bequeathed to their descendants their own thrifty, painstaking habits. John Gainsborough, the father of nine children, of whom the painter, born some time in May 1727, was the youngest, was a cloth manufacturer and merchant, who did a brisk business of the old-fashioned sort, before the introduction of the railway ruined so many local tradesmen by making it easy to send to the large towns for supplies. His surest source of income was the constant demand for woollen shrouds, the result of the memorable enactment of Charles II., who, in 1674, at the very time

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

when, though a Catholic at heart, he was ruthlessly sacrificing his Catholic subjects to his fears, yet had a care for the industries of the country, and ordered that "every Englishman should be buried in a woollen shroud." This law remained in force till 1815, and did more, perhaps, than anything else to promote the increase of the trade in wool. The elder Gainsborough had learnt the secret of the most economical way of making these woollen corpse garments at Coventry, which in his day was at the zenith of its prosperity as the chief centre for the production of woollen and cotton materials. Rumour adds that the artist's father supplemented his legitimate income by smuggling ; but there seems to be no real evidence for this aspersion on his character. It is related that the shroud-maker was one day bringing home a number of garments for the dead, when his cart was stopped by a custom-house officer, who insisted on examining its contents. Gainsborough was ready enough to show them to him, and seizing one of the shrouds, he wrapped himself in it, offering to let his questioner have it at a low price against the day when he was sure to need it. The startled revenue officer explored no farther, although one of the elder Gainsborough's biographers says that there "reposed amongst the dresses for the dead a keg of smuggled brandy for the comfort of the living."

Thomas Gainsborough's father was a fine-looking man with a pleasant genial manner, who brought up his children to fear God, to honour the king, and to get their own living honestly. He was just and liberal in all his dealings : able, it is said, to keep friends even with those who owed him money ; and he treated the spinners and weavers in his employ with rare generosity, for he paid them the wages due to them without any of the customary deductions. Mrs Gainsborough, whose maiden name was Burroughs, was a worthy mate for this upright, God-fearing merchant, and was one of those happy British matrons who have no history outside of their home life. She married the man of her choice, and truly lived happily ever afterwards, but for the cares and trials inseparable from the rearing of a large family of sons and daughters. She is said to have had some little talent for painting, and to have given her gifted son his earliest lessons in drawing.

Of the artist's brothers and sisters very little is known ; but that little is all to their credit. John, the eldest, generally called Jack, to distinguish him from his father, seems to have

GAINSBOROUGH AS A BOY AT SUDBURY

been a boy of great promise, who, in early manhood, anticipated to some extent certain modern discoveries in aeronautic science. John Gainsborough, too, had some talent for painting, and an amusing story is told of his having done a sign for a village inn near Sudbury, called the "Bull." John asked thirty shillings for the work, promising to paint a fine bull "fastened down with a gold chain, worth in itself ten shillings." The landlord, however, would only give one pound; and to pay him out for his stinginess, the artist painted the bull in distemper instead of oil, so that it was washed out in the first heavy shower of rain. When his employer reproached him, John replied: "I would have chained him down for ten shillings, and you would not let me; the bull, therefore, finding himself at liberty, ran away." John Gainsborough had a struggling life; and he and his wife were often helped by the more successful Thomas. He seems again and again to have just missed brilliant success, for he invented amongst other things a chronometer for correcting the longitude at sea, for which he received a large sum of money from the Government. He died in London, on his way to the East Indies, where he had hoped to be more successful than he had been in England in proving the value of his scientific discoveries.

Humphrey Gainsborough, the second son, was the great painter's favourite brother, and in later life they spent many happy hours together in London, at Henley, and at Richmond. He was a boy of very brilliant promise, and might have taken a high position amongst men of science; but he chose to become an Independent minister, and employed his leisure only in making experiments in mechanics. He is said to have anticipated the discovery of Watt which solved the practical difficulty of using steam as a motive power, and to have been broken-hearted when that more celebrated engineer took out a patent in 1769 for the separate condenser which stopped the waste of steam in the cylinder. That separate condenser had long haunted Humphrey, and some assert that Watt got the idea from him. In the British Museum is a model of a sundial made by Humphrey Gainsborough; and he was also the original inventor of fire-proof safes, and gained a prize of £50 from the Society for the Encouragement of Arts for a tide-mill he had made. He died quite suddenly in 1776, two years after Thomas Gainsborough had settled in London, falling down dead in the road on his way to dine with some friends. Portraits of

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

both John and Humphrey by Thomas Gainsborough were exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885.

Matthias, the third brother, was killed as a child by falling on a fork as he was running along with it in his hand. The prongs penetrated his forehead, and he died in great agony soon afterwards. Of Robert, the fourth brother, scarcely anything is known; but he is said to have married twice, to have run away with his first wife, and to have died somewhere in Lancashire.

Thomas Gainsborough's four sisters all married, and brought up their children in a quiet, sensible manner. Mary, the eldest, became the wife of a Mr Gibbon, a dissenting minister of Bath, and some of the very few letters from her celebrated brother which have been preserved were written to her; Susannah married a Mr Gardiner of the same town, whose grandson, the Rev. Edward Gardiner, is the owner of a number of portraits by Gainsborough, with several fine etchings, some of which are reproduced by his kind permission in this volume; Sarah married a Mr Dupont, and Elizabeth a Mr Bird, both of Sudbury. One of Sarah's sons, Gainsborough Dupont, became later his famous uncle's pupil, and had he lived longer would probably have achieved a really great reputation as a painter and engraver. He died at thirty, after working for some time with Thomas Gainsborough at Bath and for a couple of years in London, surviving his uncle nine years. A portrait group of the Elder Brethren of Trinity Hall by Gainsborough Dupont is in their Council Hall, and his own portrait by Gainsborough was in the 1885 Exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery.

Thomas Gainsborough was fortunate in his birthplace, for the old town of Sudbury, still eminently picturesque, must in his time, with its mediæval houses, its ruined Gothic palace, and narrow winding streets, have been full of inspiration to the artist. Situated on the Stour, forming the boundary between Suffolk and Essex, Sudbury is set down in some of the most beautiful scenery of the eastern counties, and the young artist had not far to go to find landscapes equal in their quiet charm to anything he could have found elsewhere. He was, indeed, from first to last, pre-eminently English in his sympathies, for, like his successor, the great landscape painter Constable, he never left his native land, in spite of the fact that Reynolds, Wilson, Ramsay, Romney, and Wright, whilst deprecating the preference of their fellow-countrymen for foreign work,

GAINSBOROUGH AS A BOY AT SUDBURY

thought it absolutely necessary to go to Italy to complete their own art-education, and would not themselves have dreamt of expecting anyone to pay such prices for their pictures as for those of foreigners, or even to buy anything but a portrait. "What could I do with it?" an English connoisseur is said to have replied to a gentleman who asked him why he did not purchase an historical picture he greatly admired; "you surely would not have me hang up a modern English picture in my house unless it were a portrait!"

Sudbury, in common with so many other country towns, had its Grammar School, one of those institutions which took the place of the old monastic seminaries and were open to boys of all ranks, who were instructed "in good letters and good manners by a learned, apt, and godly man." The "godly man" at the head of the Sudbury School when Thomas Gainsborough entered it was his mother's brother, the Rev. Humphrey Burroughs, who soon discovered that, though the "manners" of his little nephew were not only harmless, but charming, he had no aptitude for "letters" in the literary sense. True, he learnt to write a beautiful hand, and is even accused of having on one occasion forged a request from his father that he should have a holiday; but his lessons were badly prepared, his books were enriched with impromptu illustrations, and he again and again played truant to spend the day sketching in the woods and meadows near the town. The house in which Gainsborough was born, now unfortunately destroyed, had formerly been an inn, known as the "Black Horse," and behind it was an old-fashioned orchard, still proudly shown to visitors to Sudbury, where Thomas made his earliest studies of trees, and also, it is said, his first attempt at portraiture. The story goes that, as the young artist was making a sketch from a summer-house in the orchard of a pear-tree laden with fruit, a man's head suddenly appeared above a wall opposite to him. The owner of the head had evidently come to rob the orchard, and, as he looked cautiously about before climbing over the fence, Thomas rapidly added his likeness to his sketch. The intruder was just about to climb the tree itself when the artist came out of his corner: the man ran away, and at breakfast Tom showed the portrait he had made to his father. The likeness was immediately recognised, and led to the conviction of the thief, who, when it was shown to him, at once ceased his protestations of innocence and pleaded for mercy. It was

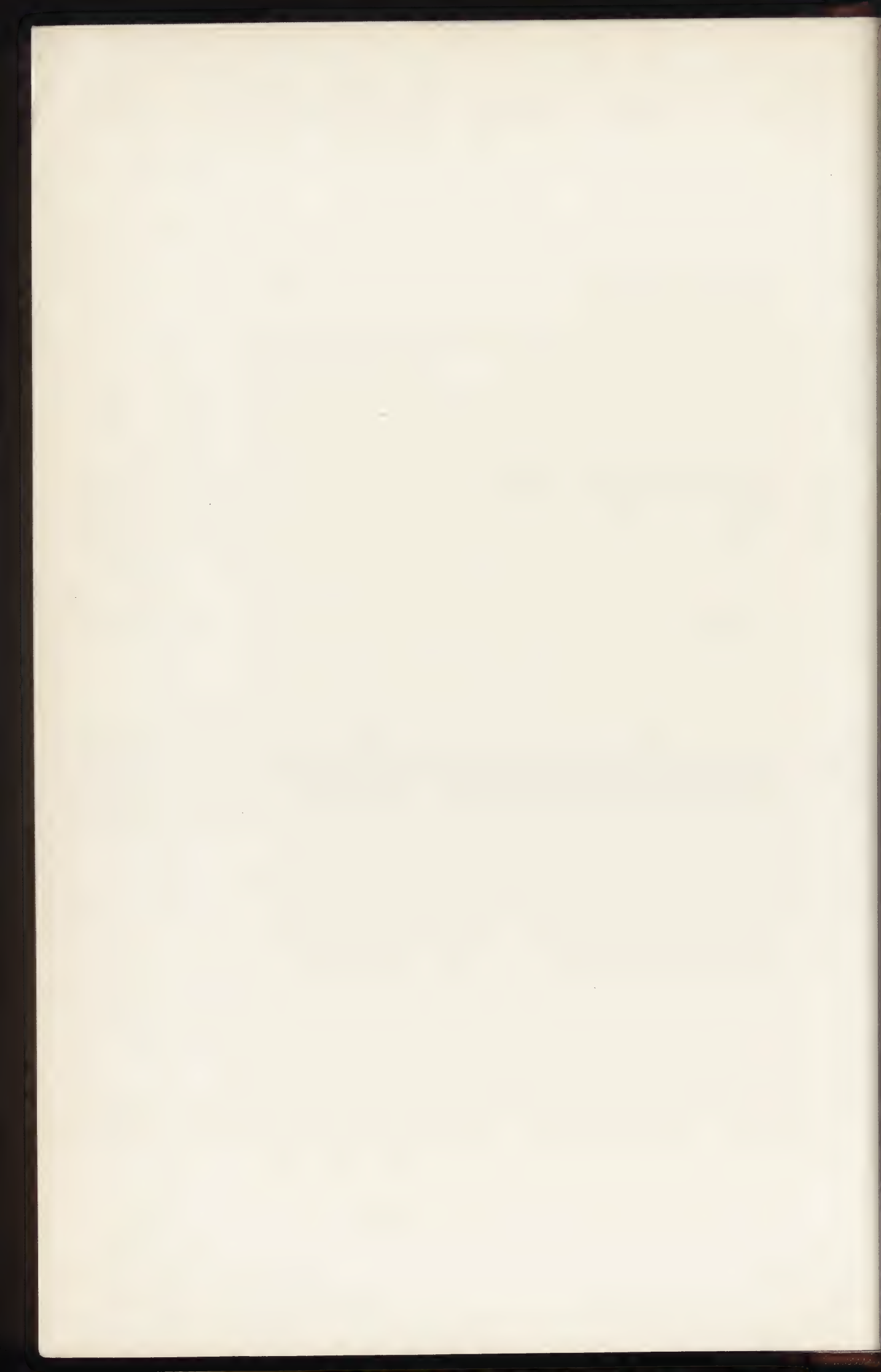
THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

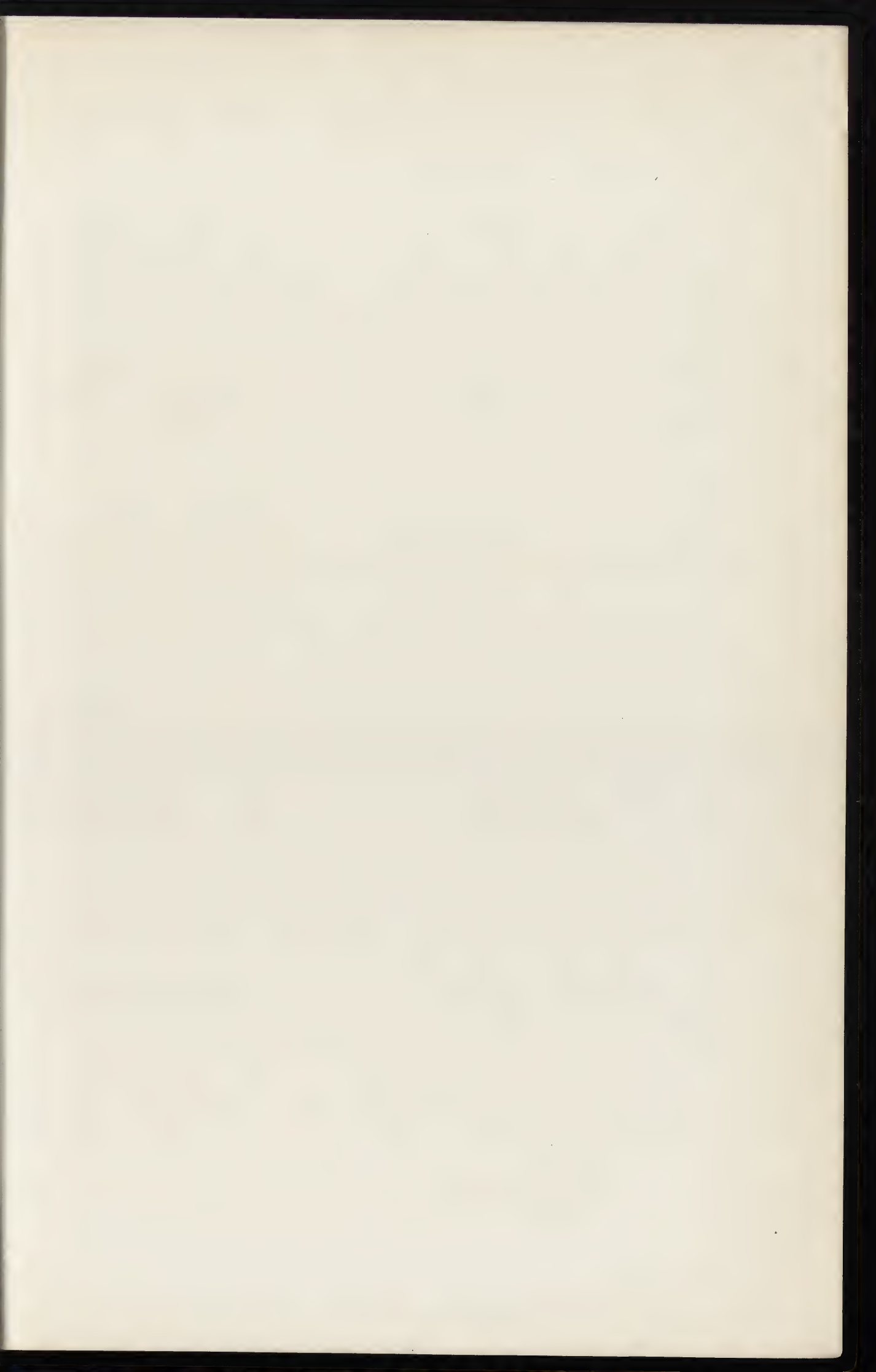
fortunately granted, for had the owner of the orchard chosen to prosecute him, he might perhaps in those days of severe punishments have been hung for his offence. Another account says it was not in his father's orchard, but in that belonging to the Rev. Mr Coyle of Sudbury, that the famous sketch, still known as *Tom Peartree*, was made. A supposed enlarged replica of this first portrait, painted on a piece of shaped wood, is still in existence. It is the property of a Mr Jackson, and was by him lent to the 1885 Exhibition of Gainsborough's Works at the Grosvenor Gallery.

Fortunately for Gainsborough, his parents were able to recognise the talent shown in *Tom Peartree* and other early sketches, and, instead of trying, as so many would have done, to force their gifted boy on in an uncongenial path, they took him away from the Grammar School at the age of fifteen, and allowed him to embrace the precarious profession of a painter. After many family consultations as to what had better be done, it was finally decided that he should go to London, where alone in England anything like art-education could then be obtained, and he was sent to a business friend of his father's, a silversmith, whose name has not been preserved.



FROM AN ETCHING ON PEWTER







Chapter II.

FIRST VISIT TO LONDON—1742-1746.

LONDON IN 1742 — GAINSBOROUGH UNDER GRAVELOT — AT ST MARTIN'S ACADEMY AND UNDER HAYMAN — AS AN INDEPENDENT WORKER IN HATTON GARDEN — GAINSBOROUGH'S PROBABLE AMUSEMENTS—HIS RESOLVE TO RETURN TO SUDBURY.

THERE was but little intercourse between the country and the metropolis at the time of young Gainsborough's departure from home, and it is probable that, though Sudbury is but fifty-eight miles from London, it took more than a day to get from one place to the other. The constant wars of the eighteenth century had either killed off or provided careers for the younger sons of the nobility, who had previously flocked to London to seek their fortunes; the distinctions between class and class were far more rigidly defined than they are now, and nothing could possibly have seemed more unlikely to the country lad than that he should ever be on familiar terms with the great ones of the capital, painting their portraits, or, more remarkable still, refusing to paint them if they did not fall in entirely with his views as to costume, etc., or if they indulged in offensive airs of patronage.

London in 1742, though it, of course, presented a very great contrast to the country town of Sudbury, was far more picturesque than it has ever been since. It was growing rapidly, especially along the banks of the river, but in a natural unconventional manner, the crowded suburbs stretching out feelers towards the open country, between which and them were sloping meadows dotted here and there with little hamlets and flat stretches of market gardens, their monotony broken only by the cottages of their owners. Until long afterwards there was an uninterrupted view of Hampstead and Highgate from Fitzroy Square, where Wilson lived and loved to

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

watch the sun setting behind the hills, and from which he used to stroll out to sketch the fine old elms in Marylebone Gardens, now completely built over. Westminster was a town in itself quite independent of the city of London; Southwark was in its infancy; and Lambeth was but a good-sized village. The gates of the city were still intact, and were closed every evening at sunset, whilst bars and chains across the principal thoroughfares impeded traffic. There were no laws against the accumulation of rubbish: Fleet Ditch was still uncovered, its "mixed fumes" offending the noses of the passers-by; only the principal streets were lighted, and that but dimly, at night. No citizen dreamt of leaving his own door unarmed, for pick-pockets, highwaymen, and bullies had it all their own way in the dark, even as costermongers, pedlars, bear-baiters, cock and prize fighters had in the day. All the dirt, the noise, and the confusion, however, seemed as natural and inevitable then as do the drawbacks of modern London life to those who suffer from them now; and though young Gainsborough probably escaped to the open country as often as he could, the evils of the town do not seem to have disconcerted him at all. To make up for the squalor and misery of London street life, there were places of amusement, such as Vauxhall Gardens and the Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres, open to those who could afford the modest sums charged for admission; and for the very poor the annual fairs, to which all were admitted for nothing, at Southwark, Greenwich, and elsewhere were something to look forward to. In fact, in spite of all the inconveniences of London, it was, in Gainsborough's time, a city full of inspiring themes for an artist. The costumes alone, though not so elegant or tasteful as they had been in the time of the Stuarts, were bright and varied enough to lend colour and charm to the most ordinary gathering, and he could not have gone far from his lodgings without meeting some gallant braving it in white satin coat, with lace ruffles, powdered wig, knee-breeches, silk stockings, and high-heeled shoes with steel or silver buckles; or some stately dame or dainty lass, with puffed and powdered *tête*, as the lofty coiffures were called, in figured silk bodice, short skirt, richly trimmed with lace, extended over an oblong hoop, long Swedish gloves, and broad straw hat looped up with flowers. Even the poorer classes had each its distinctive costume, and the rage for



FROM AN ETCHING ON PEWTER



FIRST VISIT TO LONDON

black-cloth for the men and sad coloured garments for the women had not yet set in.

Though it is possible from contemporary records and letters to form a very clear idea of Gainsborough's surroundings in London during his first visit, very little is known of his actual life. According to a writer in the August number of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1788, the year of Gainsborough's death, the nameless silversmith "was a man of some taste, and Gainsborough was ever ready to confess he derived great assistance from him." Some writers say it was this silversmith who introduced his young guest to Gravelot, a well-known French engraver and etcher, who worked for Hayman and other English artists and illustrated Shakespeare with etchings after his own designs. Others claim for Grignon, an engraver of French extraction, though he was born in London, the honour of giving Gainsborough his initial introduction to the London art-world. However that may be, it is certain that it was Gravelot who taught the young artist to engrave, a doubtful advantage to a painter, though of more value in the eighteenth than it would have been in the nineteenth century, with the present wonderful mechanical processes of reproduction. Fulcher, in his biography of Gainsborough, says that the young artist became a very skilful etcher, and left many fine plates after his own designs. As he neither signed nor dated them, it is almost impossible to trace any of these etchings; but, as already stated, some few have descended as heirlooms to the artist's great-nephew the Rev. Edward Gardiner. It must have been a dreary change for the enthusiastic lover of nature, accustomed almost to live in the open air, to copy either his own work or the second-rate copies by other artists of those of foreigners, for to the originals he cannot have had access; but fortunately Gravelot soon recognised the superior genius of his pupil and obtained admission for him into the Academy in St Peter's Court, St Martin's Lane, which had migrated in 1739 from its original home in Greyhound Court, Arundel Street. To this Academy Hogarth, though he disapproved so strongly of cheap art-education as to have said "it would lead hundreds of foolish parents to make their boys artists to keep them out of the streets," gave the casts bequeathed to him by his father-in-law, Sir James Thornhill, and in it students were able to work from the living model.

Unfortunately, when young Gainsborough entered the St

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Martin's Academy it was under the direction of none but second-rate men, although many of the greatest artists of the day had at one time or another studied there. The enthusiastic young painter seems to have learnt little in it, and endeavoured to supplement the instruction he received by working in the studio of Francis Hayman, an historical and portrait painter, then of some repute, who, later, executed the greater part of the mural decorations of Vauxhall. A man of loose morals, of whom many discreditable stories are told, Hayman was not at all the right sort of guide for a young man beginning life, but he seems to have respected the boy's innocence and to have done him no real harm. Gainsborough's future greatness was, in fact, achieved in spite of, rather than through, the influence of those who were paid to help him, and had he had the gift of expressing himself with his pen with the same facility as with his brush the record of his inner life during these years of apprenticeship would have been indeed of pathetic interest. The very few letters preserved prove that the young artist, when he chose, could explain his views with forcible clearness, and his opinions on the manners of his time would have been quite as valuable as those of Reynolds, who kept so careful a record of his own every-day life. At the end of three years, Gainsborough had had enough of St Martin's Lane and of Hayman's studio; he had produced scarcely anything, though two pencil portraits bearing date 1743 and 1744, now in the National Gallery of Ireland, show that his right hand had gained in assurance since the production of his first essay, *Tom Peartree*. He left Hayman and set up for himself as a portrait painter in Hatton Gardens, composing landscapes from his early sketches, practising a little engraving, and even trying his hand at modelling. No inkling seems to have entered his mind at this time that he could do more than earn a bare subsistence by his art. He had apparently made scarcely any acquaintances since he came to London; he may even never have heard of Hogarth or of Wilson; and the prophecy as to the great future of English artists of Richardson, who died in 1745, which inspired Hogarth and Reynolds, probably never came under his notice. What might not have been the effect on the susceptible mind of the young Englishman if he had read the burning words: "I am no prophet; . . . but I will venture to pronounce (as exceed-



FROM A DRAWING IN THE
POSSESSION OF MR HERBERT P. HORNE



FIRST VISIT TO LONDON

ingly probable) that if ever the ancient, great, and beautiful taste in painting revives, it will be in England; but not 'till English painters, conscious of the dignity of their country and of their profession, resolve to do honour to both by piety, virtue, magnanimity, benevolence, and a contempt of everything that is really unworthy of them. . . .'

"And now I cannot forbear wishing that some younger painter than myself, and one who has had greater and more early advantages, would practise the magnanimity I have recommended, in this single instance of attempting and hoping only to equal the greatest masters of whatsoever age or nation. What were they which we are not or may not be? What helps had any of them which we have not? Nay, we have several some of them were destitute of: I will only mention one; 'tis our religion, which has opened a new and noble scene of things; we have more just and enlarged notions of the Deity, and more excellent ones of human nature, than the ancients could possibly have: and as there are some fine characters peculiar to the Christian religion, it moreover affords some of the noblest subjects that ever were thought of for a picture."

Had Gainsborough read these inspiring words, would not he have resolved to be himself that young painter whom the humble-minded old artist hoped might arise "to equal the greatest masters of any age or nation, and to assert the supremacy of England in Art, as in learning, philosophy, mathematics, and poetry"? This last year of probation in London must have been one of the saddest in Gainsborough's life, for he must have felt that he had gained next to nothing by the sacrifices his parents had made to give him the best art-training procurable. He wisely resolved to linger no longer away from the home scenery which had been his truest inspiration, and at the age of eighteen he went back to Sudbury to resume his studies as a landscape painter face to face with Nature.

It is usual amongst Gainsborough's biographers to hint that, during his three years' stay in London, the young student shared the drunken revels of Hayman, Quin, and others of their stamp; but this appears to be a most unwarrantable assumption. No one who looks at the portrait of himself, supposed to have been painted not long after his return home, which was exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885, could read in the bright, innocent features and the honest eyes any of those signs which

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

the indulgence in vice all too surely leaves. Gainsborough's worst dissipations in London were probably occasional visits to the mug-house, the forerunner of the modern music-hall, to which men only were admitted, and where songs were sung to the accompaniment of a harp, whilst the audience smoked and drank beer. The intense love and appreciation of music which Gainsborough manifested in later life must have been a source of pleasure to him even in boyhood, though he learnt no instrument until he was considerably older, and never mastered the mysteries of notation. Handel's "Samson" and "Messiah" were produced during Gainsborough's first residence in London, and it is possible that the artist may have heard them more than once; whilst the lesser lights of English parentage, Arne, Arnold, Shield, and others, were pouring forth oratorios, operas, and songs, to which he may often have listened, though the names of their authors are not mentioned in any of the meagre notices of his early years. The probability is, however, that the only music Gainsborough heard in boyhood was not of the best class, but his ears must have been attuned to the unconscious and untutored melodies of Nature; and whilst wandering in the lonely meadows and woods around Sudbury, the whispering or wailing wind, with the answers it called forth from river, mead, and trees, must have taught him many unexpected lessons. The true interpreter of Nature, whether he express his rendering in music, in poetry, or in line and colour, must of necessity be in touch with the spirit of his theme, and when this ceases to be the case, his instinct invariably leads him to turn away and to seek elsewhere for the inspiration none but the spirit can give. At this time it was the familiar home scenes which spoke most forcibly to Gainsborough; he had still to learn that human nature could appeal to him with almost, if not quite, equal force. His ambition from the first was to be a landscape painter, and to the end of his career no rival ever really shared his devotion to his first love, Nature. Great as he undoubtedly was in portraiture, he would have been yet greater in landscape, had he lived half-a-century later, when the true claims of English landscape art were at last recognised.



FROM A DRAWING IN THE
POSSESSION OF MR HERBERT P. HORNE



Chapter III.

SHORT STAY AT SUDBURY, AND MARRIAGE.

1745.

ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME HOME—EARLY LANDSCAPE WORK
— THE GREAT CORNARD WOOD — THE INFLUENCE
OF WYNANTS — FIRST MEETING WITH MISS BURR—
HER REPUTED PARENTAGE — MARRIAGE AND REMOVAL
TO IPSWICH.

ON his return home in 1745 Thomas Gainsborough, though he brought no laurels with him, received a loving welcome from his parents, and a hearty one from his neighbours. His fellow-townsfolk were already proud of him as likely to do his native place credit, and the genial manners he inherited from his father won all hearts. His appearance at this time is described by Fulcher, who was able to converse with many who had known him personally, in the following terms:—"Gainsborough was handsome, of a fair complexion, regular features, tall, well-proportioned. His forehead, though not high, was broad and strongly marked, his nose Roman, his mouth and eye denoting humour and refinement; the general expression of his face thoughtful, though not altogether pleasant. The most casual observer would have seen that much lay there: one gifted with greater insight would have said, also, that something was wanting—few could have affirmed what." This faint praise, with its concluding hint of the something wanting, seems to do the subject of the description less than justice, for it is very evident that it was the absence of self-seeking which gave to the young artist's dreamy face the impression of a certain lack of resolution. Gay, careless, full of fun, sometimes, perhaps, even reckless, he went through life without taking any very serious thought for the morrow, enjoying the good things which came in his way, accepting his fame

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

as a happy accident, and never going out of his way to seek it. Criticism of others or jealousy of their success were altogether foreign to his nature; and the aspersions of his biographers on his hasty temper seemed to be quite unfounded. His neglect of Reynolds (see chap. 8, p. 87), the chief count in the indictment against him, seems really to have been the result of pure *insouciance*, and, as the further narrative of his life will show, he was generous to a fault, full of noble impulses, a faithful husband, a fond though not an ambitious father, and a friend to be relied on in trouble.

Soon after Gainsborough's return to Sudbury he became acquainted with Miss Margaret Burr, with whom he fell in love at first sight. The story goes that he first saw her when he was sketching in a wood near Sudbury, and that, to quote the words of the sympathetic art-critic, Allan Cunningham, "she entered unexpectedly upon the scene, and was at once admitted into the landscape and the feelings of the artist."

It seems a pity that this charmingly romantic account should have been upset by later researches revealing the prosaic fact that Margaret Burr was the sister of one of the travellers employed by the father of her lover, so that the first meeting probably took place in that father's shop. However this may be, one of the earliest portraits painted by Thomas Gainsborough at Sudbury was that of the beautiful young girl, and before the picture was finished the painter and his sitter had become engaged. Allan Cunningham hints that the proposal was made by the lady; but he gives no authority for this aspersion on her maiden delicacy. She brought her husband an annuity of two hundred pounds, paid, she did not herself know by whom, but it was whispered about in Sudbury that it came from one of the exiled Stuarts, said to have been her father. Margaret herself was proud of this rumour, and more than once alluded to the fact that she was of royal blood. Her singular beauty, with a certain aristocratic air, not shared by her brother, the traveller, lent probability to the report. Other writers, notably Thomas Green of Ipswich, in his "Diary of a Lover of Literature," and F. G. Stephens, in his notes on the collected works of Gainsborough exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885, say that Margaret Burr was the child of one of the



FROM A DRAWING IN THE
POSSESSION OF MR HERBERT P. HORNE



SHORT STAY AT SUDBURY, AND MARRIAGE

Dukes of Bedford, probably the fourth—that haughty aristocrat who opposed the Bill for the construction of the New Road, because it would “raise a dust opposite Bedford House,” and who was one of the nobles most fiercely denounced by “Junius” in his celebrated letters, having been said by the adherents of the exiled Stuarts to have been hand and glove with them, and, of “all men in England, to have most frequently climbed James’ cellar stair.”*

Certain critics, who had an opportunity at the 1885 Exhibition of studying the portraits of the Duke and of his reputed daughter almost side by side, claim to have been struck by the likeness between them; but Gainsborough, though he painted two portraits of the Duke and several of the fair Margaret, learning, of course, to know every shade of expression in the faces of both, never seems to have suspected any connection between them. Had he known or only guessed that his wife’s income came from his noble patron, he would surely have betrayed his sense of the fact in some way, but there is not the slightest allusion to an expression of a suspicion in the accounts of his life by any of his critics, who would, of course, have ferreted out so very piquant a bit of scandal, had there been any hint on which they could have founded their researches.

Whatever may have been the parentage of Mrs Gainsborough, there is no doubt that she was very lovely as a girl, for even as late as the early part of the present century, when Fulcher wrote his charming and, on the whole, fairly accurate monograph on her husband’s life, she was still spoken of by old people at Sudbury as having been the most beautiful woman in Suffolk. The pair were married a few months after their first meeting, when Gainsborough was but nineteen, and Margaret seventeen. They took a small house in Friar Street, Sudbury, and settled down happily to their humble housekeeping, Gainsborough working on much as he had been doing before, producing many beautiful landscapes, which, however, seldom found purchasers.

It is difficult now, when, to quote from an amusing pencil note in the biography of Reynolds *à propos* of Hogarth’s objection to cheap art-education, “the South Kensington

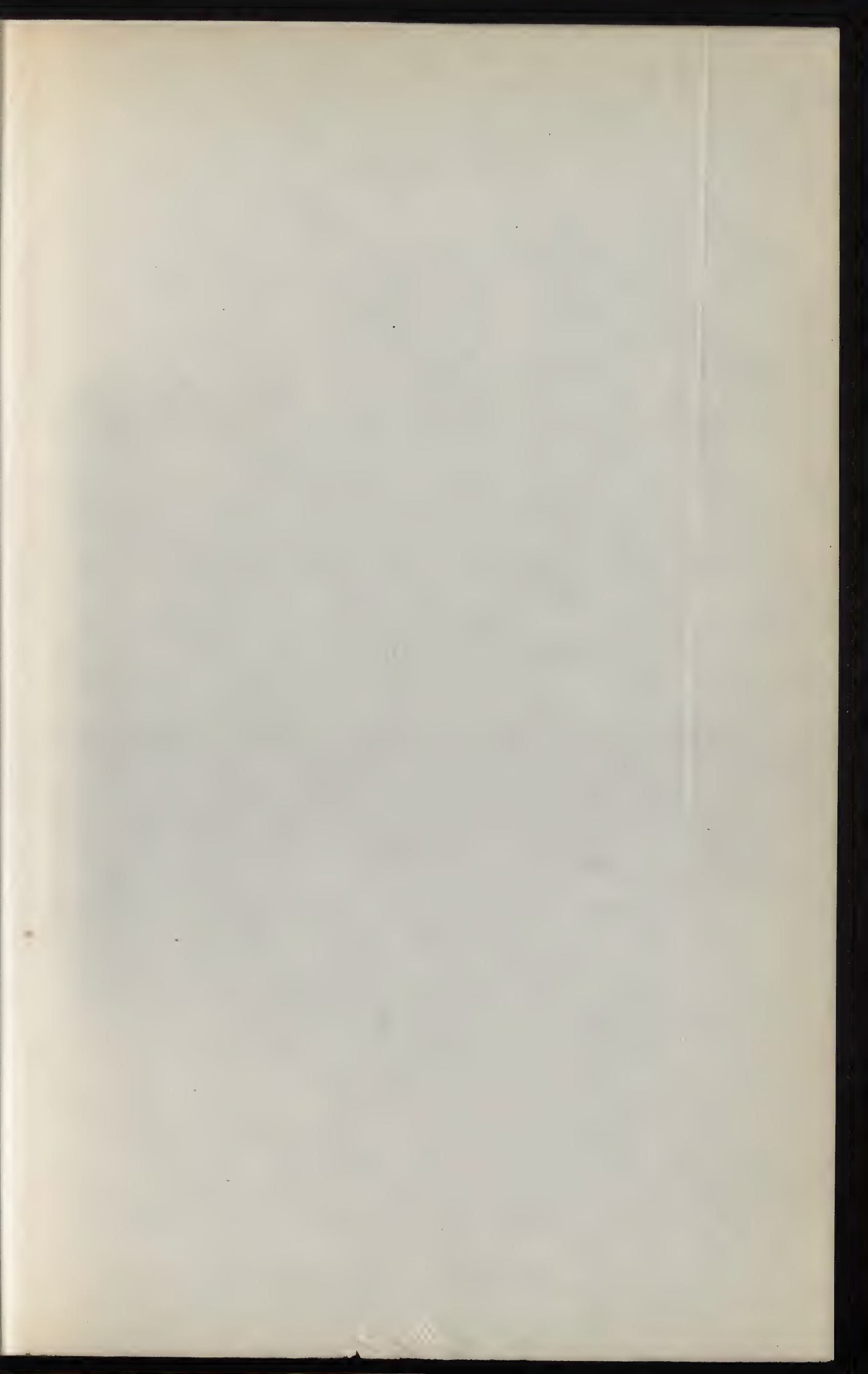
* James III. is said to have received his followers in a small audience chamber, to which secret access could be had by means of a dark staircase leading up from a cellar beneath it. (See Lang’s “Pickle, the Spy,” p. 160.)

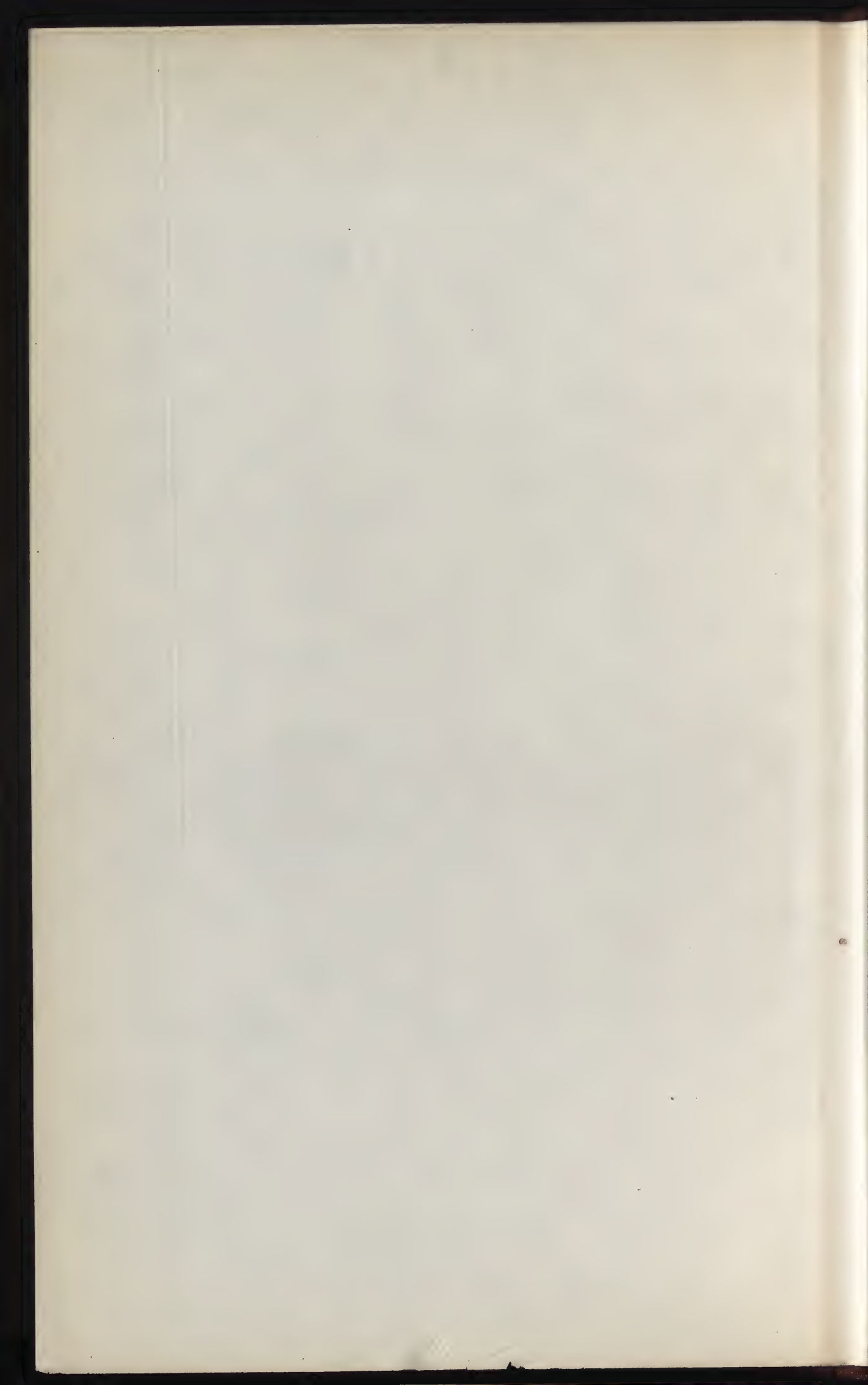
THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

and other art schools are turning out hundreds of beggars every year," each, though never likely to sell a picture, provided with an elaborate set of tools for producing works of art, to imagine how hampered the painter was before such things as tubes for holding colours, sketching stools, umbrellas to protect the worker from sun and rain, etc., were invented. What the French call the *plein air* landscapist had absolutely no existence then; for, at the very most, only black-and-white sketches, supplemented by notes of colour, were practicable out-of-doors. All the more honour, therefore, is due to those who, like Gainsborough, gave an actual transcript of real scenery, not mere compilations of the features of several imaginary landscapes. The great artist's earliest clumps of trees and bits of wood and meadow are true reproductions of nooks and corners of the districts immediately surrounding his first home, such as were to be met with nowhere else, and in his later work he maintained the same absolute truthfulness to Nature.

It is on account of this faithfulness under all the hampering conditions of the infancy of landscape art—a faithfulness unrivalled until Constable, inspired in a similar way, carried on the work begun by him—that Gainsborough may justly be called the Father of English landscape painting, rather than Wilson, to whom that honour is generally assigned. In 1745, when Gainsborough wisely returned to Sudbury to work steadily at landscape, Wilson, though thirteen years his senior, was still in Italy, chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of Italian art in its decadence; and when, in 1760, that artist exhibited his *Niobe*, which made his reputation, Gainsborough—though they had, alas, attracted little notice—had already produced many of his best landscapes.

In his early landscape work, of which the great *Cornard Wood*, reproduced in this volume, is a very typical example, Gainsborough is said to have betrayed the influence of Wynants, one of the founders of the Dutch school of landscape painting, whose pictures were at that time much sought after. His fondness for painting on a red ground especially is generally traced to his study of Wynants' work; but from the first the young English artist greatly excelled the seventeenth-century Dutchman in the dignity of his compositions, the simplicity of his colouring, and the picturesqueness of his accessory







Turner, J.M.W. 1845

Repose.

J.M.W. Turner 1845



SHORT STAY AT SUDBURY, AND MARRIAGE

figures, nor was it long ere he entirely shook off his influence, if it ever really affected him at all.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to trace and identify the landscapes of Gainsborough, for he rarely signed them, and it was not until after his death that they were justly appreciated; moreover, as will be seen in the course of this narrative, the artist gave them away with reckless generosity. The great *Cornard Wood*, however, a very typical example of Gainsborough's first manner, painted for Alderman Boydell, undoubtedly dates from the Sudbury time, and in its quiet colouring, its fine aerial perspective, and its harmony of composition, it marks the young artist's great superiority over the master he is said to have taken as his guide. It represents a very characteristic wood scene, with a pool of water in the foreground, moving figures in the distance, and the village of Cornard, from which it takes its name, as a background. It is also known as Gainsborough's *Forest*, and was engraved under that name by Boydell in 1790. It is now in the National Gallery, having been bought in 1875 from Mr Watts Russell, to whom it was bequeathed by Mr Watts, who inherited it from its original purchaser, so that there can be absolutely no doubt as to its pedigree.

Chapter IV.

THE GAINSBOROUGHS AT IPSWICH—1745-1760.

MEETING WITH JOSHUA KIRBY — MR KILDERBEE AND THE
HINGESTONS—BIRTH OF GAINSBOROUGH'S DAUGHTERS—AN
EARLY PORTRAIT—FIRST MEETING WITH THICKNESSE —
LANDSCAPE PAINTED FOR HIM—PORTRAIT OF WOLFE.

IT was not long after their marriage before the young couple realised that the only hope of commercial success for the artist would be in painting portraits; and, as there were no rich people eager to have their likenesses taken at Sudbury, they reluctantly decided to remove to Ipswich, where, in 1746, they took up their residence in a small house at a rent of £6 a year. Though not exactly a fortune, Mrs Gainsborough's £200 a year enabled the young couple to live very comfortably in Ipswich whilst the artist was looking out for remunerative employment. The necessities of life were far cheaper in those days than they are now, and even if the blood of the Stuarts or of the dukes of Bedford was in her veins, the fair young bride turned out to be a thrifty and notable housewife, a true helpmeet for the enthusiastic painter, who was from first to last too much absorbed in art and music, and too indifferent to worldly success, to be able to manage his own business affairs satisfactorily. Fortunately perhaps for posterity, the local magnates were slow to realise the great presence amongst them of the genius whose long residence in Ipswich was to add such lustre to its name, and Gainsborough worked steadily on, producing numerous beautiful sketches of scenes on the Orwell and in the meadows beyond the town, remarkable for their truth to Nature and simplicity of composition. "Those who haunt auction rooms," says Armstrong—who, strange to say, in spite of his keen appreciation and masterly criticism of Gainsborough's later portraits, failed to recognise fully the unique beauty of his

THE GAINSBOROUGHS AT IPSWICH

landscape work—"continually come across small canvases, often very red in tone, in which hedgerow trees overshadow small groups of people, old white horses, donkeys, and other rural impedimenta. . . . These are debris from Gainsborough's time at Ipswich, and occasionally have a charm which in its own way is as personal and penetrating as that of a masterpiece from their author's years of glory."

The only offer of employment Gainsborough received during the first few months of his residence at Ipswich was from a rich landowner, who asked him to call on him, and explained that he wanted his house painted and done up. Needless to say, the work was declined, and no doubt the young couple had a hearty laugh together over the incident. It was really beginning to seem useless to hope for any money reward for Gainsborough's unremitting toil, when the tide turned at last, for he made acquaintance with Joshua Kirby, a true lover of art and a generous patron of artists. Later, Kirby became President of the Incorporated Society of Artists, out of which grew the Royal Academy, and in that capacity he exhibited two or three landscapes of his own of little merit. He was, however, a good teacher, and gave George III. lessons in perspective. When Gainsborough first met him, he was a young man with a family of little children, one of whom later became the celebrated Mrs Trimmer, who wrote so many charming books for the young, including the still popular "History of the Robins."

It was when Gainsborough was painting his picture of "Freston Tower" from the banks of the Orwell that Kirby first spoke to him; but it is probable that he had often before watched the young artist at work. Though he does not seem himself to have bought any of Gainsborough's work, he introduced him to others who did, and the two often went out sketching together. After a few years of genial intercourse, Kirby was compelled to leave Ipswich for London, where Gainsborough must often have met him later. He paid the artist the compliment of leaving one of his boys with him as a pupil; and in a letter the future Mrs Trimmer wrote to her brother soon after their parting, she bids him take example from Gainsborough and try to acquire his courteous manners; an incidental proof of the esteem in which the Suffolk painter was held by her.

It was probably through the Kirbys that Gainsborough

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

became acquainted with the Mr Kilderbee of Ipswich for whom he painted several pictures, and who was the first purchaser of the fine *View in the Mall, St James' Park*, reproduced in this volume. The fame of the young artist of Ipswich now began to spread throughout Suffolk, and he was constantly invited to the houses of the gentry in the neighbourhood. One of his most constant employers was the Rev. Mr Hingeston, who had a handsome house near the picturesque little town of Southwold, on the Suffolk coast, for whom, at wide intervals, Gainsborough painted several portraits, including one of the clergyman himself, two of his wife, and one of his son. That of Mr Hingeston, senior, is a typical example of the artist's earlier manner; whilst the second portrait of Mrs Hingeston was one of the last likenesses painted by Gainsborough. Except when lent for exhibition, none of these portraits have ever been out of the possession of the family of their original owners, nor have they ever been restored or touched in any way. Some of them thus remain invaluable examples of the work of the Suffolk period of Gainsborough's career, and may usefully be compared with the portraits painted at Bath and in London. Dr Hingeston, the son referred to above, writing to a friend soon after the artist's death, gives a few very interesting details respecting him. "I remember Gainsborough well," he says; "he was a great favourite of my father; indeed, his affable and agreeable manners endeared him to all with whom his profession brought him in contact, either at the cottage or the castle; there was that peculiar bearing which could not fail to leave a pleasing impression. Many houses in Suffolk, as well as in the neighbouring county, were always open to him, and their owners thought it an honour to entertain him. I have seen the aged features of the peasantry lit up with a grateful recollection of his many acts of kindness and benevolence. My father's residence bears testimony alike to his skill as a painter and his kindness as a man; for the panels of some of the rooms are adorned with the productions of his genius. In one is a picture of Gainsborough's two daughters, when young; they are engaged in chasing a butterfly; the arrangement of the figures, and the landscape introduced in the background, are of the most charming description. There are

THE GAINSBOROUGHS AT IPSWICH

several other drawings, all in good preservation, and delineated in his happiest manner." A small portrait group of a Mr and Mrs Pond of Ipswich seems to date from about the same time as the earlier Hingeston likenesses. It is noteworthy, says Armstrong, "for a most dainty precision of brush, proving the artist's sincerity and delight in his task," with none of the passion and gorgeous imagination which the same critic characterises as notes of Gainsborough's later life.

Yet another enthusiastic admirer of the genius of Gainsborough as a portrait painter during his Ipswich time was Mr Edgar, a lawyer of Colchester, for whom several pictures, now lost, were painted, including the likeness referred to by Gainsborough in an often-quoted letter, bearing date March 13th, 1758, in which he speaks of pressure of business in the "Face way," and explains the delay in accepting an invitation to Colchester as the result of his being afraid "to put people off when they were in the mind to sit." The artist alludes in this same letter to fault having been found with "the roughness of the surface" of the portrait, *à propos* of which he adds that the roughness complained of is "of use in giving force to the effect at a proper distance, and what a judge of painting knows an original from a copy by; in short, being the touch of the pencil, which is harder to preserve than smoothness." "I am much better pleased," he says, "that they (his critics) should spy out things of that kind, than to see an eye half-an-inch out of place, or a nose out of drawing when viewed at a proper distance. I don't think it would be more ridiculous for a person to put his nose close to the canvas and say the colours smell offensive than to say how rough the paint lies; for one is just as material as the other with regard to hurting the effect and drawing of the picture. . . ." So very few of Gainsborough's actual words have been preserved, that the rest of this characteristic letter is given below, though it refers to matters of little interest now. "I hope, sir," the artist goes on to say, "you will pardon this dissertation upon pencil and touch, for if I gain no other point than to make you and Mr Chubb laugh when you next meet at the sign of the Tankard I shall be very well contented. I'm sure I could not paint his picture for laughing: he gave such a description of eating and drinking at that place. I

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

little thought you were a lawyer when I said not one in ten were worth hanging. I told Chubb of that, and he seemed (to) think I was lucky I did not say one in a hundred. It's too late to ask your pardon now; but really, sir, I never saw one of your profession look so honest in my life, and that's the reason I concluded you were in the wool trade. Sir Jasper Wood was so kind (as) to set me right, otherwise, perhaps I would have made more blunders. THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH."

It is interesting to note that although, as is incidentally proved in the letter just quoted, Gainsborough had to humour his sitters and to justify his mode of handling to them, he did not neglect his landscape work, but continued to produce many careful studies of the scenery near his temporary residences. The descendants of Mr Edgar are the possessors of many fine sketches, which were given to their original owner by the artist, and must even then have been worth evry much more than the amount paid to him for the portraits he was obliged to paint for the sake of the small sums they brought in.

It is, unfortunately, impossible to obtain any real information about the home life of the Gainsboroughs during their fifteen years' residence at Ipswich. That two daughters were born to them is all that has been ascertained; and the fact that their portraits as children are referred to by Dr Hingeston as having been painted on the panels of one of the rooms of his father's house near Southwold, prove that they must have first seen the light whilst their father was all but unknown. They were named Mary and Margaret, and seem to have inherited much of their mother's beauty, for when the Gainsboroughs went to Bath, they attracted from the first considerable notice and admiration. Their mother appears to have kept them very much in the background during their childhood and early girlhood, for there is absolutely no reference to them in any correspondence dating from the Ipswich period. Gainsborough's chief intimate friends at Ipswich seem to have been musicians and singers, for he is said to have given many concerts, and a portrait group of the members of a musical club to which he belonged has been preserved, which, though a mere unfinished sketch, is full of character and interest. It was described by its owner, Mr Strutt of Ipswich, in the following terms: "Immediately in front of the spectator are the portraits of Gainsborough himself and his friend



PORTRAIT STUDY OF A
YOUNG GIRL



THE GAINSBOROUGHS AT IPSWICH

Captain Clarke, who is leaning familiarly on the painter's shoulder. The heads of both are turned towards Wood, a dancing master, who is playing on the violin, accompanied on the violoncello by one Mills. The latter figure is merely outlined, Gainsborough declaring that he 'could not recollect the expression of his phiz.' Gibbs, on the opposite side of a table which is standing in the centre, is sound asleep. There is a sly piece of satire in this, he being the only real musician in the party, and his sleeping would seem to indicate that the performance is not of first-rate quality. It is a candle-light scene, and, by the condition of the table, some degree of conviviality appears to have prevailed. Gainsborough has his glass in his hand, that of Gibbs stands before him, as also does Clarke's, and one is overturned: a couple of lights are placed on each side of a music-stand, before which are the two performers. The portrait of Gainsborough possesses much grace, and is very like that exhibited at the British Institution many years ago. He is dressed in a dark claret-coloured coat; Clarke is in uniform; Wood, in blue; and Gibbs, in sober grey."

About 1753, when Gainsborough had already been working at Ipswich for seven years, he attracted the notice of Philip Thicknesse, Governor of Landguard Fort, at the mouth of the Stour. It is said that it was the replica of *Tom Peartree*, referred to on pp. 11 and 12, that first brought Gainsborough into connection with Thicknesse, whose figure was for some time to loom so largely in his life, and whose influence over his career has been so much exaggerated by most of the artist's biographers. The Governor, it is said, was walking with a friend in a garden at Ipswich, when he noticed what he took for a man leaning over a wall, and asked his companion why the fellow remained stationary so long? The friend laughed, and led Thicknesse close up to the figure, when it was discovered to be merely a painting on wood. Struck by the skill with which the portrait was painted, Thicknesse determined to call on the artist, by whom he was courteously welcomed. "I told him," says Thicknesse, "I came to chide him for having imposed a shadow instead of a substance upon me." "Mr Gainsborough," he adds, "received me in his painting-room, in which stood several portraits truly drawn, perfectly like, but stiffly painted and worse coloured: among them was the late Admiral

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Vernon's,* for it was not many years after he had taken Porto Bello with six ships only ; but when I turned my eyes to his little landscapes and drawings, I was charmed. These were the works of fancy, and gave him infinite delight."

The credit has often been claimed for Thicknesse of having been almost, if not quite, the first to recognise Gainsborough's genius. That this was not the case is proved by the fact that the artist had already painted many portraits of distinguished persons, including that of Admiral Vernon referred to in the passage just quoted, and had several pupils, as well as the son of his earlier friend Joshua Kirby. The exaggerated view taken of Thicknesse's influence is chiefly due to the fact that he wrote a biography of Gainsborough soon after that artist's death, in which he dwelt with much self-gratulation on all he had done for the struggling young artist, whose difficulties were really over before they met. He fails, however, as his own critics have done, to realise the real credit due to him of having been one of the first to recognise the beauty of Gainsborough's landscapes, and the significance of his remark that "these were the works of fancy, which gave their artist infinite delight." Whilst receiving too much praise as the patron of unknown genius from some critics, however, very severe measure has been dealt out to Thicknesse by others. Fulcher says of him : "Descended from an ancient family and possessed of high connections, these things only served to call attention to his follies and to make his failings conspicuous. Handsome and insolent, a soldier and a bully, the father of a peer and a scandaliser of the nobility, he abused every privilege and neglected no opportunity of self-injury. He had, in a remarkable degree, the faculty of lessening the number of his friends, and increasing the number of his enemies. He was perpetually imagining insult, and would sniff an injury from afar. Explanation, concession, apology, everything that would satisfy a gentleman, would not satisfy Philip Thicknesse. Contention was essential to his existence. Presented with a commission in early life, almost the first use he made of it was to fight a duel. He obtained promotion, and libelled his superior officer. Imprisonment could not teach him wisdom, for at

* This portrait, which is now lost, was engraved by Ardell, and was certainly anything but stiff in attitude. It was probably painted soon after the commander's return from the unfortunate Carthagen expedition, at his seat at Nacton, Suffolk, where he died in 1759.

THE GAINSBOROUGHS AT IPSWICH

the expiration of the term of his confinement his liberty again served as a cloak for maliciousness. At length, having lost friends, health, and fortune, he could think of no better method of revenging himself on mankind than by publishing his biography, wherein his spites, his bickerings, his disappointments, the ill-natured things he did, the mistakes he made, the worth he insulted, are recorded with a minuteness which his most malignant enemy might have envied. How he cured Lord Thurlow of bile, and quarrelled with him about payment; how he was entrusted with the care of two young ladies in France, and how he confined them in a convent because their dog made a meal of Mrs Thicknesse's paroquet; how he befriended an eminent actor in early life, and how ungrateful it was of him not to subscribe for a copy of the 'Memoirs'; how he was entrusted with some private letters of Lady Wortley Montagu,* and how Lord Erskine wheedled him out of the secret of their address."

Crushing as this sarcastic account of the Governor's conduct of life is, it incidentally reveals that he really was a man of note and importance in his day, who may have been of real use to Gainsborough. Fulcher, who seems to have hated Thicknesse as if he were his own personal enemy, does him the further injustice of likening him to Steevens, the bitter anonymous writer in the *St James' Chronicle* and the *Critical Review*, of whom Johnson, who worked with him on the edition of Shakespeare published in 1773, said: "He lives like an outlaw." Philip Thicknesse was no outlaw, but merely a good-natured, conceited man, really anxious to help others, but at the same time eager that his help should be gratefully and publicly acknowledged by the recipients of his bounty. In spite of the pompous and patronising manner of his new acquaintance, Gainsborough soon became friends with him, for he shared the young artist's intense love of music, and the strangely-assorted pair spent many happy hours together, practising on the fiddle, or the viol di gamba, an instrument then much in vogue. Mrs Gainsborough, it is said, did not get on so well with Thicknesse, who, in his biography of her husband, accuses her of stinginess and, whenever he alludes to her, speaks of her in a sneering manner. These reflections on his hostess, however, rather tell against himself; for a liberal patron could not but have been welcome to the wife of an

* For account of this lady see p. 45.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

artist, had not the patronage been marred by the way in which it was bestowed. At a time when such authors as Johnson, Pope, and Addison dedicated their books to men of rank, and artists depended for daily bread on commissions to paint the portraits of celebrities, there was nothing unusual in the relations between Thicknesse and Gainsborough; but Mrs Gainsborough was evidently determined that her Tom should retain his independence, even if he did accept commissions from so great a man as the Governor of Landguard Fort. Johnson, when asked by Boswell if he thought Thicknesse's "Tour" a good book, replied: "Yes, sir, to read once; but I do not say you are to make a study of it, and digest it." It would seem that much the same remark would apply to the oft-quoted biography of Gainsborough by the same author. It is a book to read once, but it would never have been "digested" and quoted from as it has, but for the paucity of other material for a life of the artist.

The first picture painted by Gainsborough for Thicknesse was a view of Landguard Fort, the commission for which is thus described by the Governor himself: "As I wanted a subject to employ Mr Gainsborough's pencil in the landscape way, I desired him to come and eat a dinner with me, and to take down in his pocket-book the particulars of the fort, the adjacent hills, and the distant view of Harwich, in order to form a landscape of the yachts passing the garrison under the salute of the guns of the size of a panel over my chimney-piece." Thicknesse, in his account of the transaction, goes on to say: "I was much pleased with the performance, and asking him his price, he modestly said he hoped I would not think fifteen guineas too much. I assured him that in my opinion it would (if offered to be sold in London) produce double that sum, and accordingly paid him and lent him an excellent fiddle; for I found that he had as much taste for music as he had for painting, though he had never touched a musical instrument; . . . but before I got my fiddle home again he had made such proficiency in music that I would as soon have painted against him as to have attempted to fiddle against him."

Very quaint are Thicknesse's further reflections on the genius he had thus unexpectedly discovered: "I believe," he says, "it was what I had said to him about the landscape and Thomas Peartree's head which first induced Mr Gainsborough



*From an old Engraving;
by T. Major*

LANDGUARD FORT



THE GAINSBOROUGHS AT IPSWICH

to suspect (for he only suspected it) that he had something more in him which might be fetched out. He found he could fetch a good tone out of my fiddle, and why not out of his own palate? The following winter I went to London, and I suspected . . . that my landscape had uncommon merit, I therefore took it with me; and, as Mr Major, the engraver, was . . . esteemed the first artist in London in his way, I showed it to him. He admired it so much that I urged him, for both their sakes as well as mine, to engrave a plate from it." Mr Major demurred, fearing the sale of impressions would not recoup him for his outlay; but Thicknesse at once offered to take ten guineas' worth himself, and the engraving was made. The picture, alas, was afterwards destroyed by being hung on a damp wall; but a few rare examples of the print remain, proving that Thicknesse was not far wrong in his high estimate of the original, which, he says, made "Mr Gainsborough's name known beyond the circle of his country residence."

In the possession of Mrs Pym of Brasted, Kent, is a very beautiful likeness by Gainsborough of James Wolfe, the conqueror of Quebec, as a young man, reproduced by her kind permission in this volume. It was in all probability painted at Ipswich, though it is impossible to say exactly when; as, however, Wolfe was absent from his native country during the greater part of his short life, but was on garrison duty in Scotland and England from 1749 to 1758, the choice of time would appear to rest between these two dates, and the portrait may therefore have been one of the very first painted by the great Suffolk artist.

After fourteen years of work at Ipswich—during which, whether, as has been so eagerly claimed, by the aid of Thicknesse or not, Gainsborough's fame spread far and wide—the artist decided to move elsewhere, and he fixed upon Bath as a fashionable city, where there would, of course, be many rich people glad to have their portraits painted. Mrs Gainsborough was probably influenced in her readiness to acquiesce in the change by the fact that her daughters were now growing up and would soon be of an age to marry; but, in his biography of Gainsborough, the whole credit of the step taken is claimed by Thicknesse, who boasts that, but for him, Gainsborough would have remained in obscurity at Ipswich for the rest of his life. The Governor, like most fashionable

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

folk of the day, had a house at Bath, where he and his family went once a year at least to take the waters and gossip with the rest of the *élite*. He promised that if Gainsborough would go there, he himself would find him a suitable residence, and give him his first commission in his new home. Yes, he would have his own portrait painted, and when the great folks then in Bath should see it, they would, of course, flock to the studio of its painter !



GENERAL WOLFE



Chapter V.

EARLY WORK AT BATH—1760-1762.

BATH IN 1760—BEAU NASH—GAINSBOROUGH'S QUARREL WITH THICKNESSE—VANDYCK AND HIS INFLUENCE OVER GAINSBOROUGH—FIRST PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF PICTURES IN LONDON—PORTRAITS OF LORD NUGENT, LADY MONTAGU, RICHARDSON, AND STERNE.

WHEN the Gainsboroughs removed to Bath in 1760, that city was already in the height of its prosperity as a health resort, and the various places of meeting of the fashionable world were daily thronged with celebrities. It was still the day of pomp of dress and social ceremony; gentlemen of any position would rather have died than have been seen without their elaborately curled wigs and correct costumes of satin and velvet, with silk stockings and high-heeled shoes; and even such intellectual women as Mrs Montagu, Mrs Thrale, and Fanny Burney submitted, as a matter of course, though probably with rebellious hearts, to stopping in the house all day when an evening party was in prospect lest they should disarrange the powdered pyramidal coiffure piled up by some much sought-after and highly-paid artist in hair.

The equally disfiguring and inconvenient hoops were also still in vogue, and were much ridiculed by satirists and wits; the large picturesque felt hats with the drooping feathers, which had set off to advantage the plainest features, were gradually being replaced by hoods and small bugle caps "as big as a crown snout off with a flower." To quote from Fairholt's interesting history of costume in England: "The extravagant quaintnesses" of the earlier part of the century "had been by this time abandoned; . . . the gentleman's wig flows not on the shoulders, the cuffs of his coat are larger and reach to the elbow, the coat is not laced, and the waistcoat has a plain band of lace only. The lady is dressed in

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

the milkmaid taste: with a tiny hat, a plain gown open in front, a long muslin apron reaching to the ground, wearing a hoop so formed that it allows the gown to curve gradually from the waist downwards." The "small and ugly bugle cap" was fortunately sometimes replaced by the "elegant cocked chip hat," with a large rose worn on the left side, and tied under the chin with cherry-coloured or white ribbon, according to the politics of the wearer—white marking the Jacobite and red an adherent of the House of Hanover. "The wearing of the rival colours became," says Fairholt, "so injurious to the harmony of a mixed society that some Bath ladies, with the hope of ending it, adopted the colours and symbols of both parties, trimming their hats alternately with bows of red and white ribbon, and displaying upon them large bunches of striped roses. The nickname of trimmers was given to them on account of this attempt to please everybody—a name still used to denote many-sided weather-cock politicians."

In 1760, though he was now a very old man, Richard, better known as Beau, Nash was still Master of the Ceremonies and King of Bath. In Goldsmith's life of this Society hero, he tells how despotic was his sway, and what a strong aversion he had to what was then called "the milkmaid style." He absolutely excluded from every ceremony over which he presided any lady who ventured to appear in a white apron, and Goldsmith says: "I have known him on a ball night strip even the Duchess of Q—— and throw her apron at one of the hinder benches among the ladies' women, observing that none but Abigails appeared in white aprons." Beau Nash died in 1761, at the age of eighty-eight, and though the Gainsboroughs probably saw him, he is not likely to have become personally known to them. Mrs Gainsborough must have regretted that her daughters were not to make their *début* in the fashionable world under his auspices, for he was as much noted, in spite of his own wild youth, for the care with which he guarded the young ladies who went to the festivities, as for his rigorous censure of the costumes they wore. Having once been a needy adventurer himself, he knew how to detect the manœuvres of those who laid snares for the feet of unwary beauties, and many are the stories told of the way in which he circumvented the plots of the young gallants of Bath. On

EARLY WORK AT BATH

his death, a public funeral was accorded to him; and it was long indeed before his memory was forgotten.

Thicknesse wisely advised Gainsborough to begin life in Bath by making some little show. "Ce qui se rassemble s'assemble," he may have urged, and the wealthy will seek the apparently prosperous artist, whilst they will ignore and shun the struggler. Accustomed to live in a house for which he only paid six pounds a year, the painter was at first alarmed at the rents asked in Bath, and Mrs Gainsborough's severe critic dwells on her parsimony at hesitating to give her consent to taking a grand residence in the newly-built Circus at a yearly rent of fifty pounds. She feared, says Thicknesse, "that it would all have to come out of her annuity," and asked her husband "why he was going to throw himself into a gaol?" "But," adds the biographer, "upon my telling her if she did not approve of the lodgings at fifty pounds a year he should take a house of a hundred and fifty, and that I would pay the rent if he could not, Margaret's alarms were moderated."

No sooner were the Gainsboroughs settled in their handsome residence than sitters began to pour in. Those of his landscapes which he had not given away as parting presents to his Ipswich friends, the artist hung in his studio, hoping, probably, that some of his visitors would take a fancy to one or another of them; but no one seems to have remarked the works which crowds would now flock to see, and dealers vie with each other in bidding for at fabulous prices. All that Gainsborough's new clients cared for was the perpetuation of their own charms, and he was very soon in a position to raise his prices from five to eight guineas for a head to forty guineas; whilst for a full-length portrait he now asked one hundred guineas. He seems to have given Thicknesse one sitting only; and then to have placed the sketch with its face to the wall, in spite of the earnest remonstrances of his patron, who saw his influence waning with a rapidity which greatly surprised and pained him. Much of Thicknesse's biography of Gainsborough is taken up with the story of this unlucky portrait, about which he and the artist quarrelled at intervals during the whole of the fourteen years of Gainsborough's residence at Bath. Thicknesse even somewhat naïvely claims that, but for the disagreement with him, Gainsborough would never

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

have left Bath for London, and thus attributes even the portrait painter's brilliant success in the metropolis to his own indirect influence. "The quarrel with myself," says this most egotistical of biographers, "turned out fortunately for him, and thereby lessened my concern, as he certainly had never gone from Bath to London had not this untoward circumstance arisen between us; and it is no less singular that I, who had taken so much pains to remove him from Ipswich to Bath, should be the cause, twenty years afterwards, of driving him from thence!" Thicknesse tells the story from the very beginning, bringing in the fact that he had given Gainsborough a portrait of a little Spanish girl, painted on copper . . . "the study of which," he says, "Gainsborough told him had made him a portrait painter." In return for this "little Spanish girl," Gainsborough gave Thicknesse a portrait of Mrs Thicknesse, which had apparently been painted some time before her marriage. This portrait he sent to Thicknesse, when that gentleman was absent in London, "rolled up in a landscape of the same size and of his own pencil." The recipient of this double gift says of it: "I was much surprised at the first opening of it to see the head of a large oak tree, instead of Mrs Thicknesse's head, but I soon found between the two pictures a note as follows: 'Lest Mrs Thicknesse's picture should have been damaged in the carriage to town, this landscape is put as a case to protect it, and I now return you many thanks for having procured me the favour of her sitting to me: it has done me service, and I know it will give you pleasure.'"

Without a word of comment on the generosity of the now celebrated artist in sending two valuable paintings from his own hand in return for a little picture by an unknown man, Thicknesse goes on to say that Gainsborough had often urged him to sit for a companion portrait to that of Mrs Thicknesse, which he as often declined—"not," he says, "because I should not have felt myself, and my person too, highly flattered, but because I owed Mr Gainsborough so much regard, esteem, and friendship that I could not bear he should toil for nothing, knowing how hard he worked for profit."

"However," continues the biographer, "during the last year of his residence at Bath"—that is to say, thirteen years after the first sketch for Thicknesse's portrait was made—

EARLY WORK AT BATH

"Gainsborough fell in love with Mrs Thicknesse's viol di gamba, and often when he dropped into my house and took it up offered me a hundred guineas for it; at that time I had reason to believe I might not find it inconvenient, ever to remove from my own house in the Crescent, and observing to Mrs Thicknesse how much he admired her viol, that he had some very good ones of his own, and that she might at any time have the use of either, she consented to give him an instrument made in the year 1612, of exquisite workmanship and mellifluous tone, and which was certainly worth a hundred guineas."

The Thicknesses, having resolved to "give" the instrument to Gainsborough, now invited him, with his wife and daughters, to supper, with a view, the reader naturally supposes, to present the valuable instrument with proper *eclat*; but, alas for the Thicknesses' reputation for generosity, he goes on to tell how, after supper, his wife, "putting the instrument before Gainsborough, desired he would play one of his best lessons upon it; this, I say, was after supper, for till poor Gainsborough had got a little borrowed courage (such was his natural modesty) he could neither play nor sing. He then played, and charmingly, one of his dear friend Abel's* lessons, and Mrs Thicknesse told him he deserved the instrument for his reward, and desired his acceptance of it; but said: 'At your leisure, give me my husband's picture to hang by the side of my own.'" "I knew," says Thicknesse, "with what delight he would fag through the day's work to rest his cunning fingers at night over Abel's compositions and an instrument he so highly valued. Gainsborough was so transported with this present that he said, 'Keep me hungry!—keep me hungry! and do not send the instrument till I have finished the picture.'"

The Thicknesses, however, evidently determined to clinch the bargain, sent the viol the next morning, and Gainsborough stretched a fresh canvas, invited Thicknesse to sit, and soon "finished the head, rubbed in the dead colouring of the full length," and even added the figure of a favourite dog belonging to the sitter lying at his feet. The portrait really did seem likely to be finished now; but, as before, Gainsborough laid it aside. He was evidently not in sympathy with his model; and in spite of every effort on Thicknesse's part, he could not be

* For account of Abel see next chapter.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

induced to touch the likeness again. The biographer revenges himself for this indifference by inveighing against the artist for his breach of promise, speaks of his own unfinished likeness as resembling that "of a drowned man ready to burst, or of a ragged body which had been blown about on a gibbet," and relates how Gainsborough even invited Mrs Thicknesse to his studio to show her the portrait of Fischer,* completely "finished in scarlet and gold like a colonel of the Foot Guards," with that of her husband in its "tatter-a-rag condition" beside it.

This was altogether too much for the poor lady, says her husband; she burst into tears and withdrew from the studio, writing to Gainsborough as soon as she got home, begging him to put her husband's picture "up in a garret, and not let it stand to be a foil" to that of a more fortunate sitter. According to Thicknesse, Gainsborough took her at her word, and at the same time returned the *viol di gamba*. Meeting the artist the very day after this occurrence, Thicknesse reproached him in no measured terms, and observed to him that his conduct was not consistent with his usual delicacy nor good sense; that even if he had "made a foolish bargain with Mrs Thicknesse, yet it was a bargain, and ought to be fulfilled; for I must own that, had he been a man I loved less, I too should have been a little offended." Gainsborough at once, adds Thicknesse, acknowledged that he had been wrong, and promised to finish the picture in his very best manner and to send it to Mrs Thicknesse forthwith. Nothing, however, came of his penitence; and, after waiting a little longer, his angry friend wrote and asked him to send it home whatever its condition, adding that "Mrs Thicknesse was certainly entitled to the picture, either from his justice or his generosity . . . that he would not give a farthing for it as a mark of his justice; but if he would send it to him from his generosity, unfinished as it was, he should feel himself obliged." Much to Thicknesse's disgust, the portrait promptly arrived in answer to this dignified epistle, and Mrs Thicknesse acknowledged its receipt on a card on which she bid the artist "take his brush, and first rub out the countenance of the truest and warmest friend he ever had, and so done, then blot him for ever from his memory."

Other biographers of Gainsborough—notably Allan Cunningham—tell the story somewhat differently, asserting that

* For account of Fischer see next chapter.

EARLY WORK AT BATH

Mrs Thicknesse received a hundred guineas from Gainsborough for the instrument, and that he deeply resented the claim for a gratis portrait in addition to the money payment. However that may be, the long quarrel brings out vividly the characters of the various actors in the little tragi-comedy, and incidentally throws considerable light upon the Bath period of the artist's career. Thicknesse's story of his vain efforts to get himself immortalised by his old friend's brush is in fact the only contemporary account of Gainsborough's life at Bath, the references to him being exceedingly meagre, even in the writings of the many celebrities whose portraits he painted. Not one of them has recorded a conversation with the artist to whom they sat, or alluded in any way to the surroundings in the studio which must have become familiar to them. Unlike his great contemporary, Sir Joshua Reynolds, who, though hampered by deafness, was in touch with all the life and thought of his day, and knew the private as well as the public joys and sorrows of his many sitters, from the Duchess of Devonshire down to the ragged gutter children he enticed into his studio to pose for him, Gainsborough, except when he was taking the likeness of an actor or a musician, did his work and let his patron go, with the result that, fine and life-like as his portraits are, they are none of them quite so full of character as those of his great rival. He loved to depict the beautiful and the picturesque: the ugly failed to appeal to him from its pathetic side, and he would often refuse to paint a likeness if the appearance of the sitter did not altogether please him. His habit of never signing or dating his pictures adds yet more to the difficulty of piecing together a consecutive account of his life and work. The critics who were fortunate enough to see the fine collection of the great artist's paintings shown at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885, brought together with infinite pains by Sir Coutts Lindsay, were, however, struck with the ease with which approximate dates could be assigned, the merest tyro being able to distinguish between an Ipswich and a Bath portrait, a Suffolk or a London landscape.

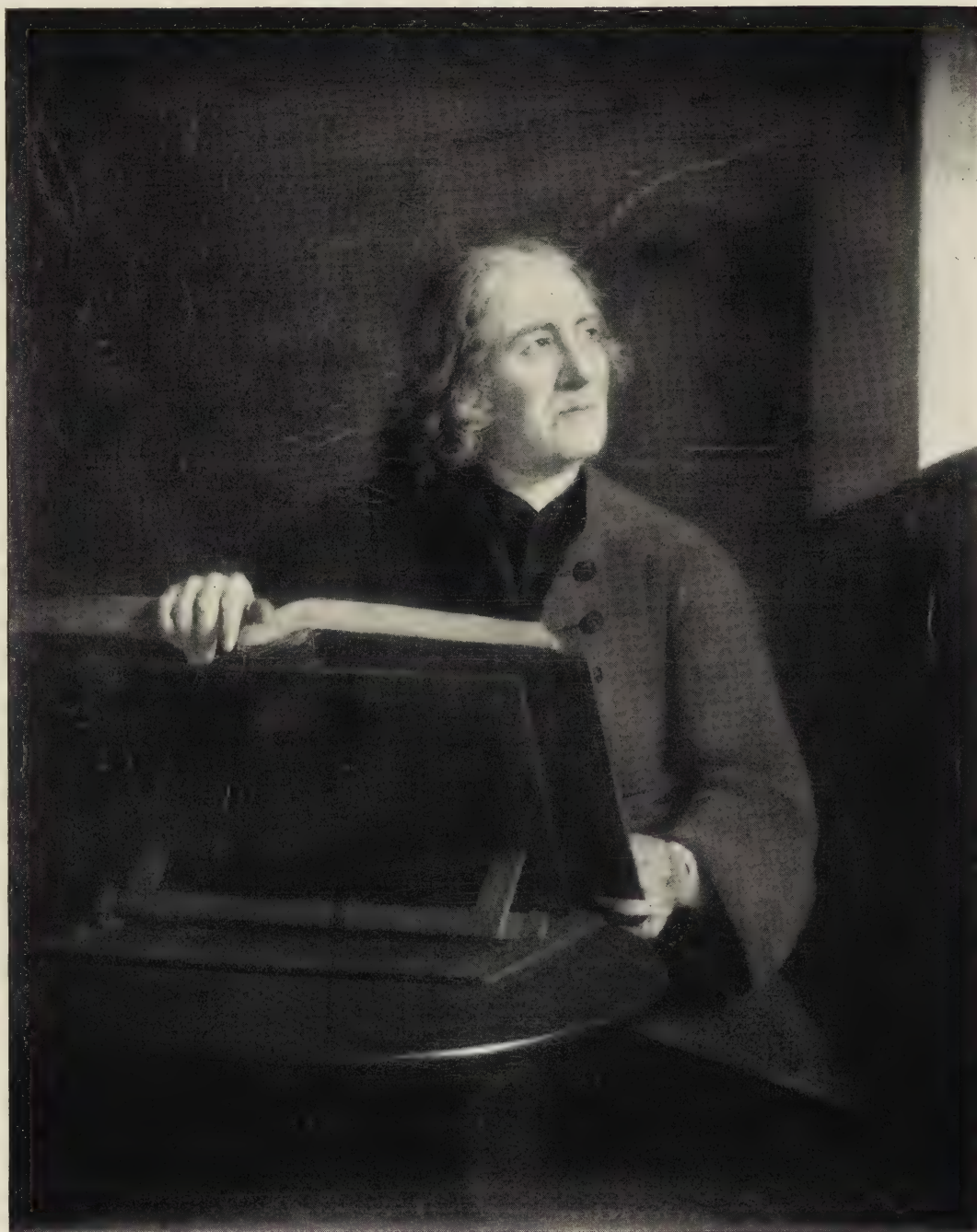
Soon after his arrival at Bath, Gainsborough first became acquainted with the works of Vandyck, many of whose masterpieces were then in the houses of the nobility living in the neighbourhood, whose ancestors had been immortalised by the brush of the great Fleming. Thicknesse seems really

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

to have been of use to the Suffolk artist in obtaining access to the various private galleries, and for that, if for nothing else, a debt of gratitude is due to him. Hitherto Gainsborough's acquaintance with the works of other masters must have been of the slightest, and the first sight of such heirlooms as were now before him seems to have been a perfect revelation to him of the great possibilities open to a portrait painter. Until he came to Bath he had been a landscape painter by choice and a portrait painter by stern necessity; now he for the first time realised all the beauty and the poetry which lay hidden in the human face divine, all the pregnant meaning of every passing expression, all the deep significance of every accessory detail, however trivial, by which character was betrayed. With this new light upon his path he knew at last how rich a field for study lay before him amongst the thinkers and the workers with whom he was now to be brought into contact; and, though to the end of his career landscape was still first in his affections, he had now received the accolade as a portrait painter, and he no longer grudged the time and thought required to do justice to his sitters.

Every spare moment was now given to the copying of the portraits of Vandyck to which he was able to obtain access, and many were the secrets of colouring, of selection, and of the arrangement of accessories he learned from his great predecessor. He became, in fact, so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Flemish artist, that in some cases only the greatest experts can tell his reproductions from the originals. This is very notably the case in the fine copy of the *Pembroke Family* at Wilton House, which was sold after the artist's death for £129, and, in a minor degree, in that of the *Duke of Aremberg*, reproduced in this volume by the kind permission of its owner, the Rev. Edward Gardiner. "Gainsborough's hand," says Armstrong, in his able comparison between the two great masters, "was lighter than Vandyck's, and his taste in colour more luminous, airy, and transparent. But both men won their effects by sometimes over-sharp opposition between the cool lights of their silks and satins and the glowing transparent shadows in the crumpled folds."

Two of the earliest portraits painted at Bath by Gainsborough were those of Lady Ray and of Orpin, the Parish Clerk of Bradford-on-Avon. In the former, the influence of



PORTRAIT OF ORPIN,
PARISH CLERK OF BRADFORD, WILTS.



EARLY WORK AT BATH

Vandyck comes out in the graceful falling of the draperies and the richness of colouring of the crimson silk dress ; in the latter, it is rather in the general arrangement than in any special detail that force and spirit are revealed. The *Parish Clerk*, now in the National Gallery, is, in spite of its early date, one of Gainsborough's happiest portraits, for every touch tells, and the whole picture is instinct with the personality of the noble old man, who looks up from the open Bible he has been reading with features full of wrapt devotion, the light from the open window above him falling full upon his face. In this likeness Gainsborough unconsciously achieved the very effect he later unsuccessfully aimed at in an attempted portrait of Shakespeare (see next chapter, pp. 56, 57), though he does not seem to have realised his own success or to have set any special value upon the picture, for he gave it to Wiltshire, the carrier, in return for services rendered to him (see below), from whose heirs it was bought for the National Collection in 1867.

The arrival of the Gainsboroughs at Bath in 1760 coincided with the first public exhibition of pictures held in the Strand by the Royal Society of Artists, to which Reynolds sent four portraits ; Gainsborough's old master, Hayman, one ; and Richard Wilson his celebrated *Niobe*, which made his reputation, and was painted for the Duke of Cumberland. Though undoubtedly invited to contribute to this initial show, for his old friend Joshua Kirby was on the committee, and later succeeded Hayman as President of the Society, Gainsborough sent nothing. He was probably too much occupied in settling down in Bath to have any portrait ready, and he knew only too well that a landscape would be but little esteemed. The great success of their first show led the Society of Artists to determine on holding an annual exhibition ; but, as they could not all agree as to the arrangements, they divided into two parties, one remaining at their old quarters in the Strand, where they opened their second exhibition on April 27th, 1761 ; the other migrating to a large room at a house in Spring Gardens, near the old entrance to the park from Charing Cross, where they inaugurated a new Gallery on May 9th of the same year. At this, the third public exhibition of pictures in London, Gainsborough was represented by a full-length portrait of Mr Nugent (afterwards Lord Clare), thus for the first time coming into contrast with Reynolds,

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

then in his thirty-ninth year, who sent his life-sized portrait of Lord Ligonier (now in the National Gallery), and his smaller portraits of Sterne, Lady Waldegrave, and the Duke of Beaufort. Other noteworthy works exhibited on this occasion were Hogarth's *Sigismonda*; *Picquet, or Virtue in Danger*, better known as the *Lady's Last Stake*, for which Miss Salusbury, the future Mrs Thrale, then a girl of fourteen, the friend of Dr Johnson and of Fanny Burney, sat to the great satirist; and six landscapes by Wilson, of classical subjects, at that time considered the only possible themes, except contemporary portraits, for the painter's brush, the old tradition, which was not even finally broken in the days of Turner, being still in full force: that natural scenery can only be used as a background for the figures of bygone heroes. For the catalogue of this second show of the Royal Society of Artists, Hogarth designed a frontispiece: a satirical representation of the state of art in England at the time, with Britannia watering three young trees, representing painting, sculpture, and architecture, beneath which was a tailpiece showing a monkey, in the tail coat, knee-breeches, silk stockings, and high-heeled shoes of a contemporary beau, watering three perfectly dead plants in pots, dated respectively 1502, 1600, and 1604, and named on a scroll beside them "Exotics": a quaint, yet extremely forcible, hit at the widely prevalent and generally ignorant rage for the work of dead foreign masters.

The Mr Nugent whose portrait was Gainsborough's first exhibited work was the son of Michael Nugent, a private gentleman of Ireland, who, by the aid of his talents alone, rose successively to be Lord of the Treasury and Controller of the Prince of Wales' household. He was member for a Cornish borough in 1741 and for Bristol from 1754-1774, during which time he first sat to Gainsborough. He became Baron Nugent and Viscount Clare in 1767, and Earl Nugent in 1776. He was three times married: first, to Lady Emilia Plunkett, daughter of the Earl of Fingall; secondly, to a certain Mrs Newsham, already twice a widow; and, thirdly, to Elizabeth, the Countess Dowager of Berkeley. He was something of a poet, and the friend of Oliver Goldsmith, who in 1776 addressed to him the witty "Haunch of Venison," and he is described by the biographer of Sir Joshua Reynolds as the "jolly, loud-voiced, red-faced Mr Nugent," at whose hospitable table the great artist was a frequent guest. Goldsmith

EARLY WORK AT BATH

was at Bath with Lord Clare in 1771, and it is more than probable that he was then introduced to Gainsborough; but, unfortunately, that artist is not likely to have made friends with the author of the "Vicar of Wakefield," though he had probably read his life of the local star, Beau Nash. Lord Nugent is more than once referred to in the Grenville papers, and is scornfully spoken of by Lord Dover as having passed his whole life in seeking "lucrative places and courting rich widows," whilst Horace Walpole sneers at him in no measured terms; but for all that he seems to have been a liberal patron of artists and a kind friend to struggling authors. That Lord Clare kept up his connection with Gainsborough is proved by that artist having painted and exhibited in 1765 the portrait of his son by his first wife, Colonel Edward Nugent.

It must have been in 1761, just before her death, that Gainsborough painted the portrait of the celebrated Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the gifted daughter of Evelyn Pierrepont, Earl of Kingston, who entered her at the age of eight years as a member of the Kit-Cat Club, when she must surely have been the very youngest of the Kits. In 1712 Lady Mary married Edward Wortley Montagu, who held a high appointment under George I., and her salon in London was the resort of all the chief wits and poets of the day. Later, Mr Montagu was appointed ambassador to the Porte; and the letters written by his wife from thence to her sister, the Countess of Mar, and from Italy, where she went for her health, to her daughter, the Countess of Bute, are among the most characteristic of the literary treasures preserved from the eighteenth century. Lady Montagu returned to England at the request of her daughter in 1761, and died in 1762.

Other literary celebrities painted by Gainsborough during the earlier portion of his residence at Bath were Samuel Richardson, the novelist, and Laurence Sterne, the humorist.

The portrait of the former, which is full of life and intellectual expression, the lips parted as if about to speak, was probably painted in 1761, just before the death, at the advanced age of seventy-three, of the great writer, when the popularity of his much-lauded novels, "Clarissa" and "Sir Charles Grandison," was to some extent on the wane, and certain of his worshippers were beginning to waver in their allegiance.

The portrait of Laurence Sterne, which has often been

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

compared with that painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1760, and is said to be as full as it of intellect and humour, was probably painted soon after the publication of the two first volumes of "Tristram Shandy." Sterne sat more than once to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who seems to have been deeply attached to him; but, in spite of his popularity and of his many acquaintances in the great world of London, he died alone, but for the attendance of a hired nurse, in his lodgings at the Silk Bag Shop, Old Bond Street, and was followed to the grave by only two mourners, one of them his publisher.

Reynolds dined with Sterne on February 22nd, when "the hand of death was already on his host," and on the 4th March, when the President of the Royal Academy was at dinner with the Dukes of Grafton and Portland, David Garrick, David Hume, and other notables, a footman was sent by one of the company "to ask how Sterne was." The messenger returned to say that he had gone up into the sufferer's bedroom, and found him "just a-dying." As the man looked at him he had put his hand up to his head, saying: "Now it is come," as if to stop a blow, and died in a minute.*

* See Foster's "Life of Goldsmith," Vol. II. p. 150.

Chapter V.—*continued.*

GAINSBOROUGH'S MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC FRIENDS AT BATH.

GAINSBOROUGH'S LOVE OF MUSIC AND THE DRAMA—PORTRAITS
OF ABEL—GAINSBOROUGH'S ATTEMPTS AT MODELLING—
GIARDINI—FISCHER—VARIOUS PORTRAITS OF ELIZA LINLEY
—JAMES QUIN—GAINSBOROUGH'S FIVE PORTRAITS OF DAVID
GARRICK—ATTEMPTED PORTRAIT OF SHAKESPEARE—SAMUEL
FOOTE.

ALTHOUGH the names of the highly-born men and women who sat to Gainsborough at Bath are a guarantee of the esteem in which he was held from the first by the aristocrats, who flocked to that fashionable city, it was not amongst them that the great artist sought his friends. If painting was his first love, music and the drama were formidable rivals, even to it, and more than one of his contemporaries allude to his having at certain periods of his life seemed likely to abandon the brush and become a musician; for his friend, the musical composer, William Jackson of Exeter, says that he attacked one instrument after another, and when he admired any one's playing, he would at once offer a picture in exchange for the instrument in use at the moment. He played several instruments with exquisite taste and feeling, but, to the last, refused to learn his notes. His love of the drama brought him in contact with General Palmer, owner and manager of the Bath theatre, who often gave him a box in his house, and was rewarded by gifts of pictures, some of which are still heirlooms in the family.

Amongst the musical friends of whom Gainsborough painted portraits, were : Abel, the player on the viol di gamba; Giardini, the violinist; Fischer, the hautboy-player, who married one of his daughters; and the lovely singer, Eliza Linley, later Mrs Sheridan; whilst Garrick, Quin, Foote, and the less celebrated John Henderson, who all played frequently at Bath, sat to him, the first and last several times.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Abel, "a tall and portly person," who is more than once referred to in Henry Angelo's interesting *Reminiscences* and in Mrs Delany's letters as a very skilful performer, the friend of Bach and of the Cramers, was twice painted by Gainsborough—once full-length and once seated in an old-fashioned chair, with his viol di gamba between his knees, on which he is playing. Gainsborough also painted for Abel a favourite dog and puppy, *à propos* of which picture the story is told of his having tried, in the presence of Nollekens, the sculptor, to model the head of the dog in clay, when the great master of plastic art said: "You should model more with your thumb; thumb it about till you get it into shape." On this same occasion Gainsborough gave a certain Colonel Hamilton a picture that gentleman had long coveted of the *Boy at a Stile*, because of his beautiful playing on the violin. He also bribed Nollekens to be quiet during the performance by giving him a book of his own sketches to look at, with permission to choose any two he liked. To Abel himself Gainsborough gave a large number of fine sketches, which the musician passed on to his mistress, who irreverently pinned them on to her walls, where they were seen by the father of Henry Angelo. When Abel died, his lady-love went abroad; and Gainsborough's sketches were sold by auction with the rest of her property, and dispersed.

Felice di Giardini, the violinist, who was of Italian birth, came to London in 1744, where he quickly became celebrated, and made large sums of money as a teacher and giver of concerts. Speaking of him in 1773, Goldsmith said to Dr Johnson, "even Giardini does not get over seven hundred a year"; to which the doctor replied: "That is indeed but little for a man to get who does best what so many endeavour to do. There is nothing, I think, in which the power of art is shown so much as in playing on the fiddle. In all other things we can do something at first."

Giardini's portrait was also painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, of whose house he was an *habitué*. He was present, probably on the invitation of Gainsborough, at the Royal Academy dinner in 1775: contemporary correspondence is full of allusion to the beauty of his playing, the severe critic, Horace Walpole, even joining in his praise. Unfortunately, however, he was not content with his "seven hundred a year" but undertook the management of the opera, then but little patronised in



CHARLES FREDERICK ABEL



MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC FRIENDS AT BATH

England, with the result that he lost all his money. Walpole, who had been loud in his commendation of Giardini as a performer at garden parties, etc., when asked to subscribe to the opera, wrote angrily to H. S. Conway: "No, sir; no. . . . I could not have come into the proposal of paying Giardini. We have been duped and cheated every winter for these twenty years by the undertakers of operas; . . . and as for Giardini himself, I would not cross the room to hear him play to eternity."

Despairing of retrieving his fortune in England, Giardini went to Moscow, hoping to get employment; but he died there in abject poverty in 1796. In an old account-book of Messrs Broadwood for March 1774, there is an entry showing that Giardini and another friend bought a piano for Mr Gainsborough, then living in the Circus, Bath.

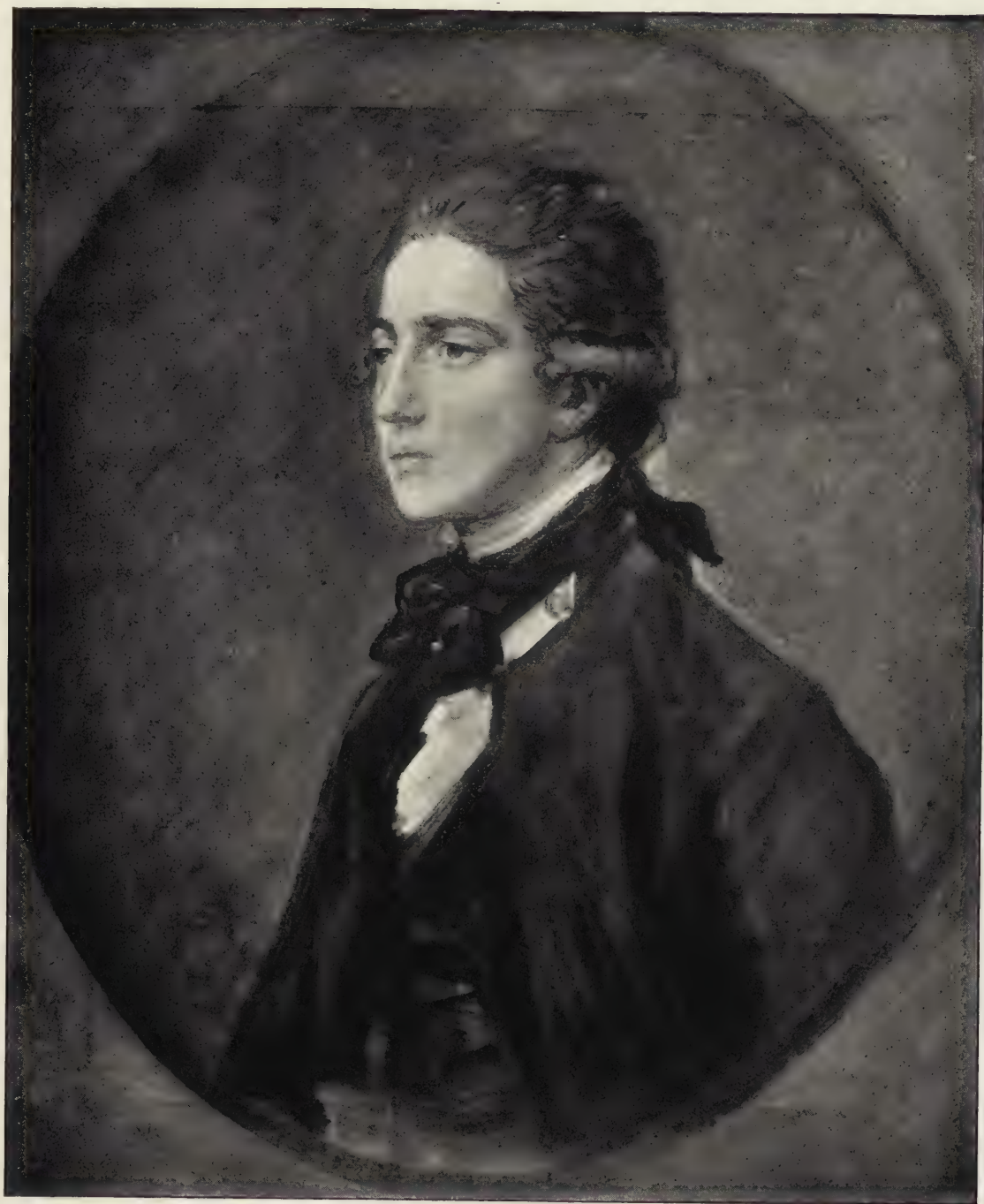
Johann Christian Fischer, the player on the hautbois, who, as the husband of his daughter, was to cause Gainsborough so many anxious hours, seems to have been a man of very fascinating personality, though of irritable temper and erratic habits. His portrait by his future father-in-law, now in the possession of the Queen, is full of refinement, and the face, which is shown in profile with the light full upon it, beams with intelligence. With characteristic love of everything connected with music, the artist, who was generally totally indifferent to the accessories in his portraits, has introduced a piano, a violin, and a hautbois, painting each one with the greatest care, and giving even the name of the maker of the piano, Merlin, whose portrait was one of Gainsborough's latest exhibited works.

Fischer, who was of German birth, had been in the service of Frederick the Great before he came to England, and quickly achieved a great reputation in London, where he took a prominent part in the Bach concerts. The Gainsboroughs seem to have fallen completely in love with him on his arrival in Bath, and to have kept up a correspondence with him on his return to London. He was a frequent guest at their house when they themselves migrated to London some years later; and it was no surprise to any one but the artist himself, when his younger daughter Mary became engaged to him in 1780. The portrait of Fischer was painted about 1769, and is said to have been given by Mrs Fischer to the Prince of Wales after the death of her

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

husband. The union seems to have been anything but a happy one; and the pair were separated a few years after their marriage. Fischer became Court musician to Queen Charlotte in the year of his marriage, at a salary of £180 a year, and retained the appointment till his sudden death whilst performing a solo before Her Majesty. He had, it is said, executed the first movement in a style equal to that of his best performances at any time of his life, when he was seized by an apoplectic fit. He was supported out of the room by Prince William of Gloucester; but died almost immediately after his arrival at his lodgings in Soho. In his "Dictionary of Music," Dr Burney says the "admirable Fischer composed for himself in a style so new and fanciful, that . . . his piece was always regarded as one of the highest treats of the night." He left all his music to George III., and apparently nothing to his wife. Writing to his friend Henderson, the actor, in 1773, Gainsborough brackets his friends Abel, Giardini, and Fischer with Garrick. "Why, sir," he says, after an enthusiastic eulogy of Garrick, "what makes the difference between man and man is real performance, and not genius or conception. There are a thousand Garricks, a thousand Giardinis, and Fischers, and Abels. Why only one Garrick with Garrick's eyes, voice, etc.? one Giardini with Giardini's fingers? but one Fischer with Fischer's dexterity, quickness, etc.? or more than one Abel with Abel's feeling upon the instrument?—all the rest of the world are mere hearers and see'rs."

It must have been during the earlier part of the Gainsboroughs' residence in Bath that they first met the lovely Eliza Linley, the future wife of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whose portrait was lent by Viscount Clifden to the 1885 Exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery. Eliza Linley was the daughter of a doctor of music living at Bath, of whom Dr Burney said "that he was a studious man, equally versed in theory and practice. Having a large family, he pointed his studies to singing, and became the first master of his day." His children, the doctor adds, "were a nest of nightingales." Fanny Burney, writing in 1773, is very severe on Dr Linley, calling him "a very sour, ill-bred, and selfish man," and the editor of her early journals says, in a footnote *à propos* of this description, that he made all his children sing in public, even to the seven-year-old, "and had refused the offers of both



SAMUEL LINLEY, R.N.



MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC FRIENDS AT BATH

Colman and Garrick to engage his daughter as a singer, saying that he thought, as she had acquired a reputation, he ought to have the advantage of her first performing in London himself." Determined to get the utmost value out of his "nest of nightingales," Dr Linley "bound his own daughter as his apprentice till she was twenty-one, and insisted on her working out her time." She, poor child, though she loved music, hated appearing in public, and again and again tried to persuade her father to release her. From the age of eight or nine years she was celebrated for her beauty, and used to sell her father's benefit tickets at the door of the Pump-room, reaping a rich harvest for him as she gracefully held up her little basket. The miniature painter, Onias Humphry, at one time lodged with the Linleys at Bath, and describes how the lovely Eliza, then nine years old, looked, "as she chanted songs from the 'Beggars' Opera' or 'Love in a Village,' seated at the foot of his easel, looking up at him unconscious of her heavenly features." Before she was sixteen she was beset with suitors—not all of them, says Fanny Burney sadly, with *honourable* intentions; but she turned a deaf ear to every solicitation, and seems to have given her heart to young Sheridan long before she was aware of it, though, like every one else, he had fallen in love with her at first sight. Rae, in his "Life of Sheridan," tells how Richard and his brother were introduced to the Linleys when Eliza was sixteen, her voice entrancing, and her beauty marvellous. The two families soon became intimate, and Eliza seems to have fallen in love with Richard at first sight, though neither he nor she were aware of it. She looked upon him as an older friend to whom to appeal for advice; and when some of her lovers became too importunate she even asked his sister, Elizabeth Sheridan, to invoke his help. Rae goes on to tell how, in 1771, Eliza was betrothed without her own consent to a certain Mr Long, "of very large fortune, and then sixty years old." Even Dr Linley, though he would lose his "apprentice's" services, was eager for the match: diamonds were given to the reluctant bride by her elderly wooer, "the wedding clothes were made, and settlements drawn up," when, for reasons not given, the poor girl was released. Dr Linley was indignant, and threatened proceedings against Mr Long, who, however, seems to have behaved very well, and probably withdrew only because of the very evident objection of his *fiancée* to marriage with him. He settled £3000 upon

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Eliza, who, though now practically independent of her father, continued to sing for his benefit. Mr Long thus disposed of, Eliza was not long left in peace. Her next lover was a married man, the Captain Matthews of whose persistent persecution she complained to Elizabeth Sheridan, saying how she hated her life as a public singer, with all that it exposed her to, and how she longed to retire into the safety of a convent. Elizabeth, wisely or not, according to the point of view of the critic, advised the poor girl to tell Richard all about it; and Richard rose to the occasion like a hero of romance, offered himself to escort her to a convent in France, and did indeed carry her off with him to that country. Eliza, who loved him better than anyone else in the world, innocently consented to going with him; and when he proposed that they should be married before he left her at the convent she had chosen, she made no objection. They were married at a little village near Calais, and proceeded on their journey afterwards as if nothing had happened. Meanwhile Dr Linley, enraged at the loss of his apprentice's services, set off in pursuit, and overtook the newly-married pair at Lille. He does not seem to have suspected Sheridan even then of anything but friendship for his daughter, and, though he told her she was a naughty girl, and forbade her escort to see her again, he took her back to Bath with him. There Captain Matthews resumed his persecution; and the story goes that Sheridan fought more than one duel with him. When the news of one of these duels, in which Sheridan was wounded, was brought to his wife, whom everybody supposed to be still Miss Linley, she is said to have exclaimed, "My husband! my husband!" and demanded to be taken to him at once. It was not, however, until 1773, after Eliza's appearance at the Oratorio in Drury Lane, when she had rivalled even Garrick in the applause and admiration she had won, that the two were formally married in England, and settled down together in London. Sheridan was then only a poor law student; but he persistently refused to allow his wife to sing in public, and seems to have been for many years the tenderest possible husband. All through Sheridan's brilliant later career, from the production of his "Rivals" at Covent Garden in 1775 till her own death in 1792, when he was in the zenith of his literary and political fame, his twice-wedded wife was his right hand, working even harder for him than she had done for her father. When he



MRS SHERIDAN AND
MRS TICKELL,



MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC FRIENDS AT BATH

became manager of Drury Lane Theatre, she supplemented his careless control by rigid attention to the accounts; she acted as critic and reviser of the plays sent to him; she was his secretary when he was in the House of Commons; and had she lived, he would probably not have died, as he did, in poverty, with bailiffs in possession. His second wife, who survived him several years, seems to have been very inferior in every way to the gifted singer who had given up everything for him.

Gainsborough's first attempt to reproduce the features of the lovely Eliza Linley was a clay model he made of her head after a concert at Bath, in which she had sung. This model was unfortunately thrown down and broken by a servant the very next day; and later a similar accident befell a plaster cast, said to have been taken from this model, which had belonged to Mr Leslie, R.A. The portrait referred to above seems to have been the very first likeness of the great singer taken by any artist of repute; but in 1783 she sat to Gainsborough in London for a full-length likeness; and in 1784 or 1785 he painted her and her sister, Mrs Tickell, together. The last-named portraits (reproduced in this volume), now in the Dulwich Gallery, were considered amongst Gainsborough's finest works; and in a letter to Mrs Sheridan, dated 2nd November 1785, quoted in Rae's "Life of Sheridan," Mrs Tickell says: "When I came home last night I found our picture come home from Gainsborough, very much improved and freshened up. My father and mother are quite in raptures with it. Indeed, it is in my opinion the best and handsomest of *you* that I have ever seen." A portrait of Mrs Tickell and of her brother, Thomas Linley, by Gainsborough, is in the collection at Knoll; and Mr C. E. Lees has, or had, a miniature of the lady by the same artist.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was an eager and devout admirer of Mrs Sheridan. In 1775, when the success of her husband's "Rivals" had raised the young couple from poverty to comparative affluence, he completed his first portrait of her, remarkable for the pathetic sadness of the expression; and the same year he begun the celebrated picture of her as Saint Cecilia, which Sheridan bought in 1790 for £150—Sir Joshua letting him have it at that low price, though he considered it "the best picture he ever painted, and really valued it at five hundred

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

guineas," because of the "solicitations" addressed to him by the lady's husband. Mrs Sheridan, who was passionately fond of children, and always had a little court of them about her, also sat to Sir Joshua as the Virgin for his *Nativity*, exhibited in 1779.

James Quin, who, when Gainsborough painted his portrait, had sunk into comparative obscurity, was at one time considered the equal of Garrick. He was of Irish birth, and first appeared on the stage at Dublin in 1714. Soon after that he went to London, where he suddenly rose into fame through the illness of a leading actor at Drury Lane. Quin took his part in "Tamerlane," then the play of the day. His successful career received a serious check about 1730, when, in a duel with a brother actor, he killed his opponent; but in 1734 he went back to Drury Lane, and, until Garrick's greater genius eclipsed him, he was considered the chief actor of his time. He was especially successful as "Falstaff." Garrick himself pronounced him to be perfect in the part, and another critic remarks: "Quin was born to play it. He was comical, and when carrying Garrick, as Hotspur, off the stage, he would say to him: 'Where shall we sup?' He was satiric, and had much of Falstaff's wit, but in him it was the appendage of a noble nature." "He seemed," said a contemporary, "to disdain the plaudits bestowed upon him, rolling out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference," and until "little Garrick, young and light, and alive in every muscle," was brought into contrast with him, infusing his own freshness and new natural life into every character he assumed, Quin was without a rival. He is said to have led a wild life when young; but when Gainsborough painted him he was a quiet, elderly man, noted chiefly for his wit, and much sought after even by such people as Mr Crisp, Fanny Burney's "Daddy," who mentions, in a letter to her, having supped with him at Bath.

In 1766, the year of Quin's death, Gainsborough seems to have painted the first of his five portraits of David Garrick, that warm-hearted, versatile, and most successful of actors and theatrical managers, who was then at the zenith of his fame, retaining still undiminished "that subtle, impalpable, evanescent humour, that fire of life," that ever-varying play of countenance, which made it so difficult to paint him in his own character, taxing even the powers of such men



*From the Mezzotint
by Gainsborough Dupont*

MRS SHERIDAN



MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC FRIENDS AT BATH

as Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds to the uttermost. "He was," says a contemporary, "the most courteous, genial, and sensitive of men; full of kindness, yet always quarrelling; scheming for applause even in the society of his most intimate friends"; yet withal, to quote another critic, "the first man in the world for sprightly conversation," in whose expressive face "the passions as they arose, chased each other" with lightning rapidity. Dr Johnson, who, as Sir Joshua Reynolds said, considered Garrick his own special property, allowing no one to browbeat him but himself, said of him, speaking to Mrs Siddons, "Garrick was the only actor I ever saw whom I could call a master both in tragedy and comedy"; and again, in defending Garrick, after his death, against an attack made on his memory by Wilkes, he dwelt on his wonderful diffuseness, saying that he never knew a man of whom it could be said with less certainty what he will do to-morrow. "His death," said Johnson in his "Lives of the Poets," "eclipsed the gaiety of nations."

Garrick's appreciation of art was far in advance of his time; he was on intimate terms, not only with the acknowledged masters of painting, but with every struggling artist of any merit, and his house in Southampton Street, and later in the Adelphi, was full of portraits of himself, which were either purchases or gifts. He was the faithful friend of Hogarth when the great satirist could hardly sell his pictures; and the letters of Fanny Burney, Mrs Piozzi, Mr Crisp, Hannah More, and others, are full of anecdotes of his generous kindness to those less fortunate than himself.

Garrick married the celebrated dancer, Eva Maria Violante, whose sweetness of manner is alluded to by Fanny Burney, and of whom Mrs Thrale said, "that woman lived a very wise life." She was of Austrian birth, and came to England with Lady Burlington in 1741. Garrick fell in love with her at first sight, and was looked at askance by her patroness as a wild young player. One night, it is said, he dressed "in woman's clothes to slip a letter into her chair without compromising her or offending Lady Burlington," who, however, soon gave her consent to the match—the pair having been married from her house in 1749. A beautiful sketch of her as a girl, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in Lord Normanton's collection, proves that contemporary accounts of her loveliness were not exaggerated. The Garricks had no children; and

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

their regret for this seems to have been the one cloud in their happy married life.

Of the many portraits painted of Garrick during his lifetime, Mrs Garrick preferred the one for which he sat to Gainsborough at Bath in 1766. It was one of two full-length *Portraits of Gentlemen* sent by the artist, with a large landscape and the portraits of a lady and gentleman, to the Exhibition of the Royal Society of Artists, and represents Garrick leaning against a pedestal surmounted by a bust of Shakespeare. It is now at Stratford-on-Avon, having, some say, been presented to the Corporation by the artist; whilst others assert that it was bought for £65. Though many stories are told of Gainsborough's difficulty in catching the likeness of the versatile actor, whose expression varied every moment, the portrait was universally approved of by his contemporaries; and Garrick himself was so pleased with it that he asked Gainsborough to paint an ideal portrait of Shakespeare for the jubilee of the famous dramatist, which he meant to celebrate at Stratford-on-Avon in 1769. Garrick was very much ridiculed for his idea of thus immortalising the immortal. Gray called it "Vanity Fair"; Foote made the greatest fun of it; and Sir Joshua Reynolds would have nothing to do with it. Needless to say, it fell flat when it did come off; but Gainsborough seems to have entered at first rather heartily into the idea of it, and set to work, to quote his own words, to make a portrait of the bard which "should take the form from his pictures and statues just enough to preserve his likeness past the doubt of all blockheads at first sight and supply a soul from his works." He seems to have realised the "form" easily enough; but, as from the jubilee itself, the soul was wanting; and in one of his very few extant letters, Gainsborough writes despairingly to Garrick:

"I doubt I stand accused (if not accursed) all this time for my neglect in not going to Stratford, and giving you a line from thence as I promised; but what can one do such weather as this—continual rainy? My genius is so damped by it, that I can do nothing to please me. I have been several days rubbing in and rubbing out my design of Shakespeare, and hang me if I think I shall let it go, or let you see it at last. I was willing, like an ass as I am, to expose myself a little out of the simple portrait way, and had

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC FRIENDS AT BATH

a notion of showing where that inimitable poet had his ideas from, by an immediate ray darting down upon his eye turned up for the purpose ; but, confound it, I can make nothing of my ideas—there has been such a fall of rain from the same quarter. You shall not see it, for I will cut it before you can come. Tell me, dear sir, when you purpose coming to Bath, that I may be quick enough in my motions. Shakespeare's bust is a silly smiling thing ; and I have not sense enough to make him more sensible in the picture, and so I tell ye, you shall not see it. I must make a plain picture of him, standing erect, and give it an old look, as if it had been painted at the time he lived ; and there we shall fling 'em.—I am, dear sir, your most obedient humble servant,

“THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH.”

In another letter, Gainsborough writes “that Shakespeare shall come forthwith” ; but the portrait seems never to have been finished, and there is no evidence of its ever having been seen by any one but the artist himself. As already stated, in his portrait of Orpin, the Parish Clerk of Bradford-on-Avon, Gainsborough achieved something of the effect he aimed at in vain in his Shakespeare, for the fine old face is lit up “by an immediate ray darting down upon the head raised in reverent meditation,” and it is just possible that the peculiarity of this portrait may have been suggested to the artist whilst he was trying to carry out Garrick's wishes.

Gainsborough's later portraits of Garrick are not all quite as happy as his first. One, of uncertain date, was painted for Dr Ralph Schomberg, of whom Garrick said just before his death, “though last, not least in love” ; another, painted in 1772, is characterised by Sir William Beechey as an admirable likeness, one of the best of Gainsborough's portraits ; and of yet another, Hazlitt, writing in *The Daily Chronicle*, in 1815, said “Gainsborough's portrait of David Garrick is an interesting piece of biography. He looks much more like a gentleman than in Sir Joshua Reynolds' tragic-comic representation of him. There is considerable lightness and intelligence in the expression of the face, and a piercing vivacity about the eyes, to which the attention is immediately directed.”

It was probably to a copy of the 1772 portrait that Gainsborough refers in the letter quoted below *in extenso*

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

as one of the very few from the great artist's own hand which have been preserved to the present day.

“BATH, 1772.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I never will consent that anybody makes a present of your face to Clutterbuck but myself, because I always intended a copy (by my own hand) for him, that he may one day tell me what to do with my money—the only thing he understands, except jeering of folks. I shall look upon it that you break in upon my line of happiness in this world if you mention it; and for the original, it was to be my present to Mrs Garrick, and so it shall be in spite of your blood.

“Now for the chalk scratch; it is a poor affair, not much like the young ladies; but, however, if you do not remember what I said in my last, and caution your brother of the same rock, may you sink in the midst of your glory! I know your great stomach, that you hate to be crammed, but by —— you shall swallow this one bait.

“God bless all your endeavours to delight the world, and may you sparkle to the last! THOS. GAINSBOROUGH.”

Samuel Foote, the clever actor and writer of satirical comedies, whom Gainsborough painted whilst he was on a professional visit to Bath, when his popularity was at its height, was the friend and companion, not only of that artist, but of Reynolds, who four times painted his portrait, and the courted companion of many of the best men of his day. He owed his success as a theatrical manager to an accident when riding across country, whilst on a visit to the Duke of Marlborough. One leg was so badly injured that it had to be amputated, and to make up for this, his host bought him a theatre with rights of dramatic representation in the Haymarket. Here Foote was brilliantly successful, playing his own comedies, such as the “Devil on Two Sticks,” “The Minor” and “The Liar”—all of which owed the applause they won to palpable hits at one or another celebrity. His “Piety in Pattens,” played by puppets, was a vigorous attack on the sentimental comedies then in vogue, and did much to check the rage for them. When the satire thus indulged in became so coarse that Foote's Theatre was closed by order of the magistrates, he continued to play his farces in private, selling tickets, which

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC FRIENDS AT BATH

were nominally mere invitations to a cup of tea at the most frequented coffee-houses. Foote was able to get fun out of everything; he never, as Dr Johnson said of him, "let truth stand in the way of jest"—he was "quite impartial, for he told lies of everybody"; but it is only fair to add that his own misfortunes amused him quite as much as those of others. When told that he must lose his leg, he remarked: "Now I shall be able to take old Falkner (who was lame) off to the life"; and when he was remonstrated with on the liberties he took with one or another contemporary, he was generally ready not only to express contrition, but to cease the mimicry complained of. He left Cock-a-doodle-doo, as he called Garrick, out of his "Piety in Pattens" when remonstrated with; and though in his "Maid of Bath" he satirised Miss Linley's venerable lover, Mr Long, he left the beautiful young singer herself unscathed.

John Henderson, the trusted friend of Gainsborough, though now almost forgotten, was a notable figure in his day, and especially the idol of Bath, where his reputation as a mimic was almost equal to that of Foote. He was said to rival even Garrick, and to have been equal to Quin in his personation of Falstaff, though Quin was "born to play" that character. Gainsborough, though twenty years his senior, lost his heart to young Henderson the first time he saw him at General Palmer's Theatre; he invited him to his house, took his portrait more than once, and when he returned to London, wrote to him more often than he had ever done to any one else. In one of these letters, dated June 27th, 1773, the loving nature of the great artist comes out in the anxiety he shows for his friend's physical and moral well-being: "Pray, my boy," he says, "take care of yourself this hot weather, and don't run about London streets, fancying you are catching strokes of nature at the hazard of your constitution." "It was my first school," he adds, "and deeply read in petticoats I am, therefore you may allow me to caution you. Stick to Garrick as close as you can for your life; you should follow his heels like a shadow in sunshine." This characteristic letter, with its many pregnant bits of wisdom, winds up quaintly with a further word for the good of the body of his much-loved friend: "Do ye hear, don't eat so devilishly; you'll get too fat when you rest from playing, or get a sudden jog by illness to bring you down again"—a warning not uncalled for, as

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

many contemporaries refer to the actor's epicurean habits. The first portrait painted by Gainsborough of his versatile young friend was given to Henderson himself, and a second was one of several *Portraits of Gentlemen* "exhibited" at the Royal Academy in 1780, but its present resting-place is unknown.

Chapter VI.

LATER WORK AT BATH—1762-1767.

PORTRAIT OF MR POYNTZ — OF COUNTESS SPENCER — THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE AS A CHILD, AND IN LATER LIFE—ARRIVAL AT BATH OF GAINSBOROUGH DUPONT — LANDSCAPES, PROBABLY PAINTED AT BATH BETWEEN 1762 - 1769 — SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS' JUDGMENT ON THEM—THE HARVEST WAGGON—MR WILTSHIRE—RURAL COURTSHIP—PICTURES INHERITED BY MR GARDINER—PORTRAITS OF LADY GROSVENOR, THE DUKE OF ARGYLL, LORD FREDERICK M. CAMPBELL, THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF MONTAGU AND OF CAPTAINS NEEDHAM AND HERVEY.

IN 1762 Gainsborough sent to the Exhibition of the Royal Society of Artists, *A whole-length Portrait of a Gentleman with a Gun*, generally supposed to have been that of Mr William Poyntz, son of the Right Honourable Stephen Poyntz, Tutor to the Duke of Cumberland, and ambassador to Sweden and France. The mother of this Mr William Poyntz was Maid of Honour to Queen Caroline, and was noted for her beauty. His sister became first Countess of Spencer, and he was uncle to the lovely Duchess of Devonshire, whose romantic story is told below. The portrait excited considerable attention at the Exhibition, which was in every way a remarkable one. An introduction to the catalogue, for which a shilling was charged, was written by Johnson, who often did a little literary work for his friends amongst the artists, although he cared absolutely nothing for their pictures. In a letter from Johnson to the then celebrated Baretti, for whom Goldsmith, Reynolds, Burke, and Garrick interceded when he was condemned to death for the murder of a man whom he struck in self-defence, he says, *à propos* of one of the early exhibitions: "This Exhibition has filled the heads of the artists and the lovers of art; surely life, if

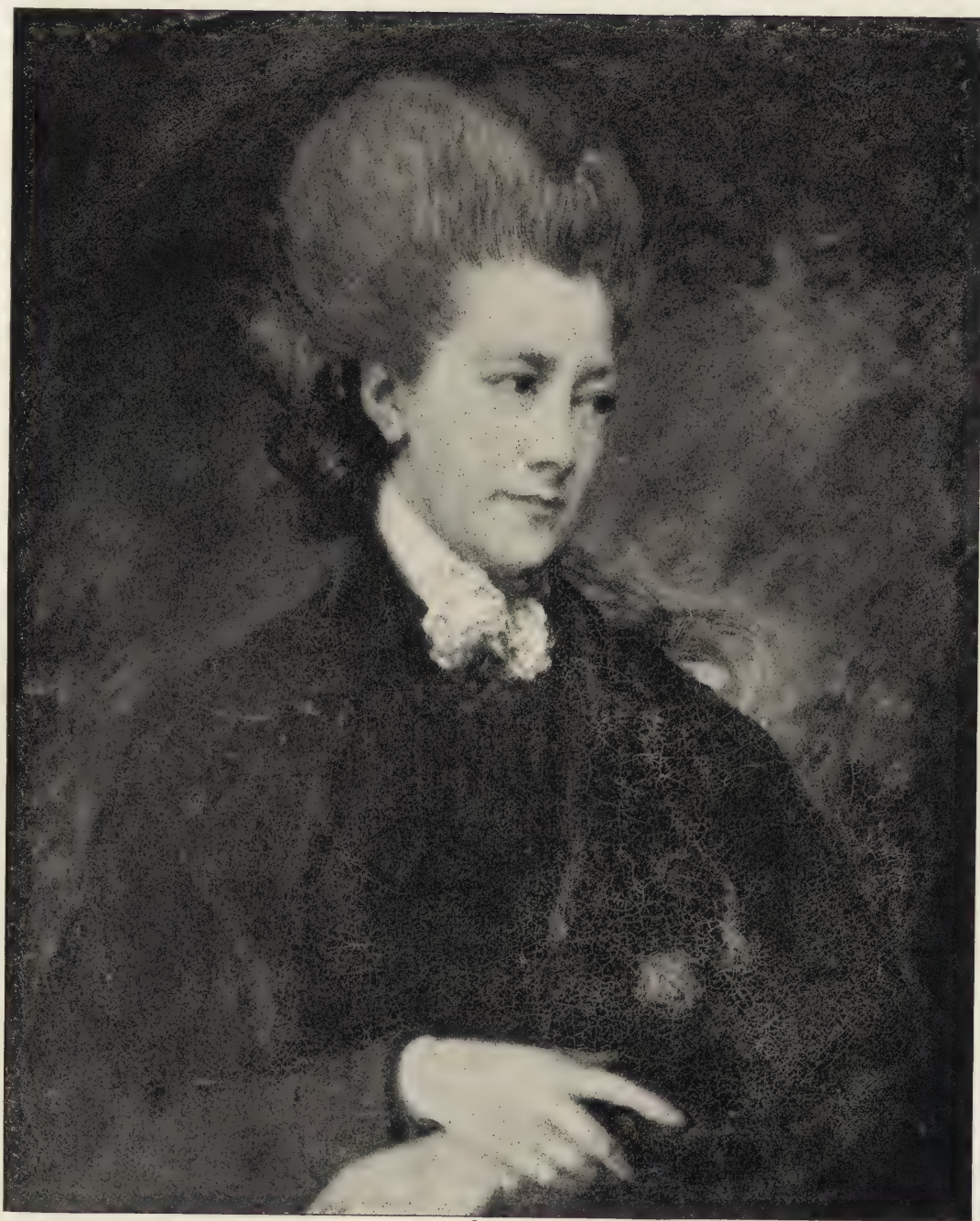
THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

it be not long, is tedious, since we are forced to call in the assistance of so many trifles to rid us of our time !”

Amongst what Johnson would have called the other “trifles” at the 1762 Exhibition were Reynolds’ *Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy*, and his portraits of Lady Elizabeth Keppel and of Maria, Countess Waldegrave, the former decking a statue of Hymen with flowers, the latter as “Dido embracing Cupid”—with six landscapes by Wilson, and various portraits of actors and actresses by artists then much esteemed, but now forgotten. In 1763—that year of intense political excitement in London, caused by the execution of Dr Cameron, and by the arrest of Wilkes—the Exhibition showed a lamentable falling off: Sir Joshua Reynolds, with many other artists, having been drawn into the political whirlpool by their friendship with the immediate actors in it. Fortunately or unfortunately, according to the critic’s point of view, politics never disturbed the mind of Gainsborough; and whilst Parliament was sitting night after night, and “voters were brought down in flannels and blankets till . . . the floor of the House looked like the Pool of Bethesda,” and the wives and daughters of the members came in such crowds to hear the debates that they overflowed even into the Speaker’s room; when Sir Joshua Reynolds’ list of sitters included the names of every man and woman of note on the side of the Opposition, Gainsborough quietly pursued the even tenor of his way at Bath, sending to the Royal Society his first exhibited landscape and two portraits: one of Mr Medlicott, and the other that of Quin, the actor, referred to in the last chapter.

In 1764, the year of Hogarth’s death and of Sir Joshua Reynolds’ serious illness, Gainsborough painted the fine portraits, exhibited in 1765, of Colonel Nugent, son of the Lord Clare mentioned above, and of General Honeywood; the latter exciting considerable notice on account of the beauty of the wooded landscape through which the General is represented to be riding.

From about the same time is supposed to date the portrait of Margaret Georgiana, first Countess Spencer, daughter of Stephen Poyntz, who, though she was later eclipsed by her lovely daughter, the Duchess of Devonshire, was considered one of the most beautiful women of the day. She sat several times to Sir Joshua Reynolds, and must have been



MARGARET GEORGINA,
FIRST COUNTESS SPENCER



LATER WORK AT BATH

about thirty when her portrait was painted by Gainsborough. In 1761 she had been present at the Coronation of George III., when Walpole, writing to Montagu, classed her with Lady Sutherland and Lady Northampton as specially distinguished for their "pretty figures." She was probably a member of the first committee of ladies of rank who presided over the popular balls at Almack's rooms, built in 1766, which, until 1840, were the resort of the ultra-fashionable world, open to none but those of the very highest "ton"; although—melancholy proof of the depravity of the time—the wives of the great nobles must often have found themselves face to face with their husbands' mistresses; and the most reckless gambling was carried on night after night. For all that, however, admission to the magic circle at Almack's was a most eagerly coveted privilege, and even Sir Joshua Reynolds, most discreet and abstemious of men, was not content till he became a member of the popular Ladies' Club.

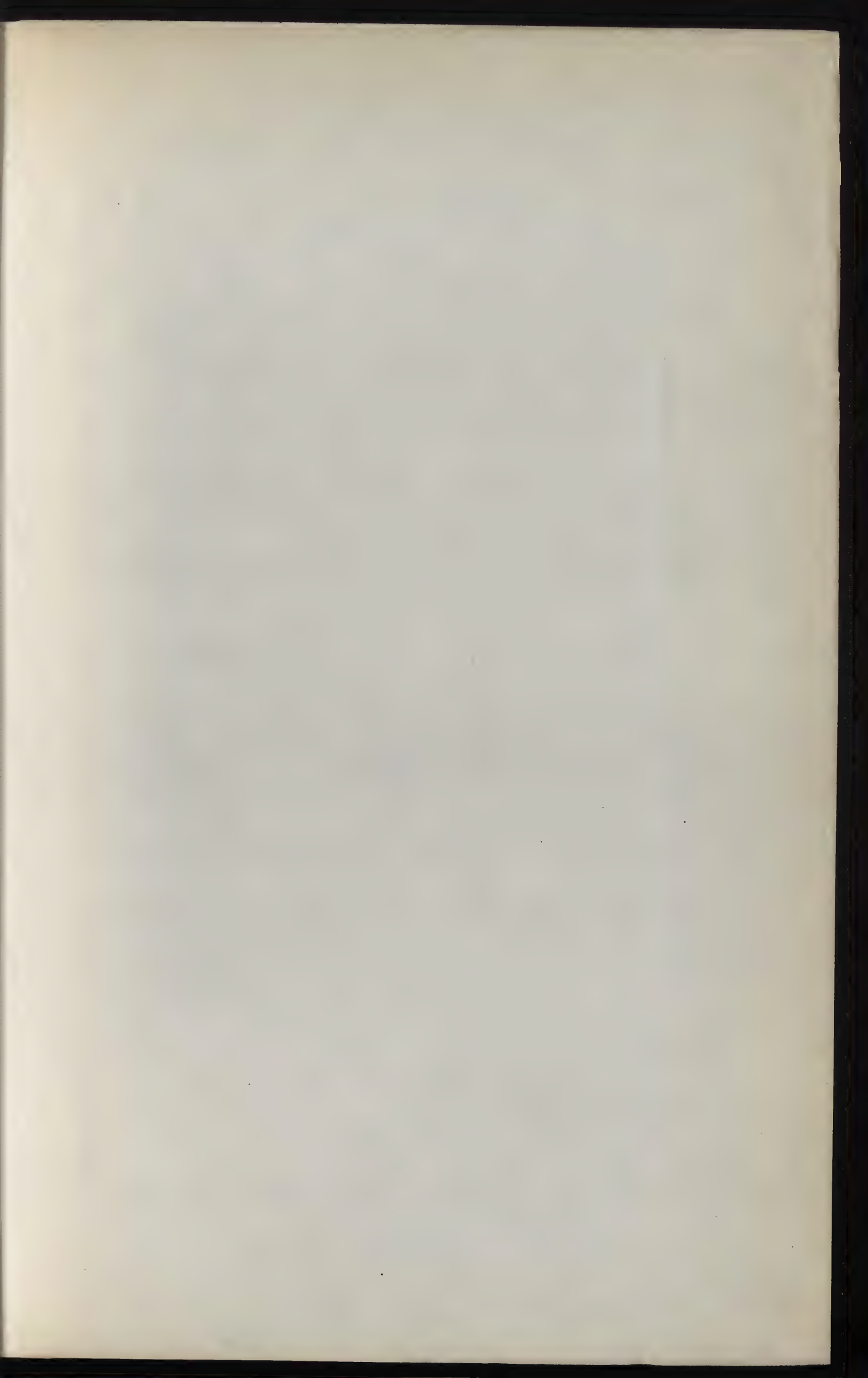
The first Earl Spencer, whose portrait Gainsborough also painted, though exactly when it is difficult to determine, was the son of the Honourable John Spencer, and the grandson of the great Earl of Marlborough. He was an enthusiastic lover of art, and formed the nucleus of the celebrated Althorp Collection. Contemporary writers dwell much on the lavish display in which he and his young bride indulged; and Lady Hervey relates that when the newly-married pair went from their seat at Althorp to London, they had "three coaches with six horses, and were attended by two hundred horsemen," the villagers on their route either "shutting themselves up in their houses or rushing out, hastily armed with pitchforks, spits, and spades," for they thought the long-threatened invasion of the French had actually come!

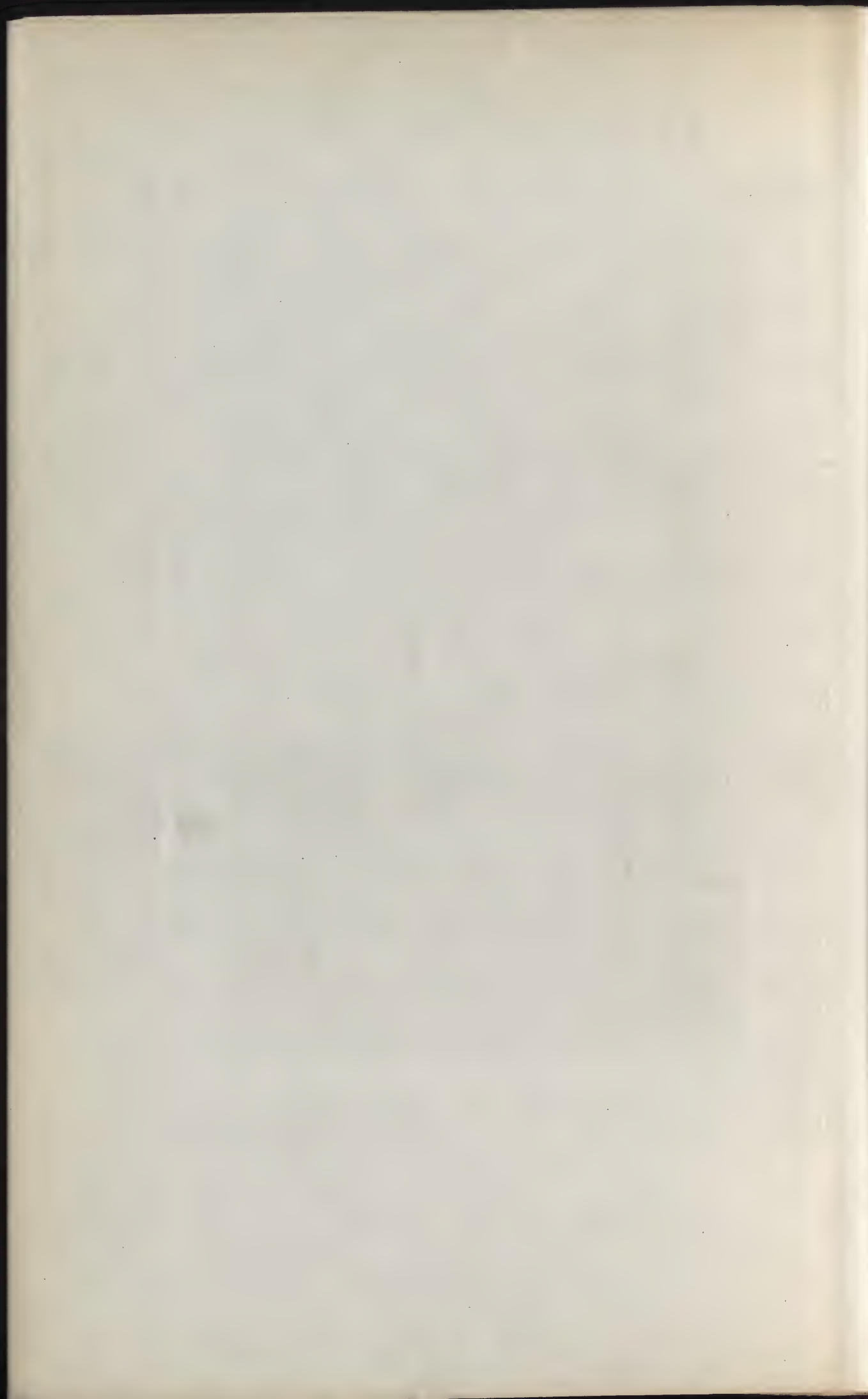
It was Gainsborough who painted the earliest of the many portraits* of the celebrated eldest daughter of the first Earl and Countess Spencer, who, as the Duchess of Devonshire, became the leader of fashionable Society in London. In this first portrait she is represented as a charming little maiden of six or seven years old, giving promise even then of her remarkable charms. In later portraits by Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds, with whom she was a very

* To avoid confusion and repetition, the accounts of those celebrities, whose portraits Gainsborough painted more than once, are given in the notices of his earliest portraits of each.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

great favourite, this promise is seen to be abundantly fulfilled. She was married at the early age of seventeen to William, the fifth Duke of Devonshire, when, as Walpole says in a letter to Mann, "she was a lively girl, natural and full of grace." She very soon became "the irresistible queen of ton," eclipsing all rivals; the most brilliant of the gay throng who danced and played the nights away at the Ladies' Club, masqueraded at the Pantheon, and promenaded at Ranelagh. On one occasion the Duchess is said to have won £900 in a day, and on another to have lost £1500, when she was handed, literally sobbing with remorse, into her carriage by Sheridan. In spite of this weakness, however, Marie Antoinette, but two years the senior of the Duchess, "had scarcely a gayer, more devoted, or more obsequious court." Contemporary letters teem with allusions to the Duchess from her first appearance in London Society, as the loveliest bride of the season, to her death in 1806. A year after her marriage she is setting the fashion of the addition to the already absurdly high coiffures of ostrich plumes of such a length that Wraxall says: "Those who wished to have ostrich plumes as long as the Duchess's searched London in vain, until an undertaker was induced to sell feathers from a hearse." In 1776 Fanny Burney, writing to her dear Daddy Crisp, speaks of having met in the Park the "young and handsome Duchess of Devonshire," and severely criticises her because "two of her curls had come unpinned . . . and her cloak . . . was flung half on and half off. . . ." "Every creature," she adds, "turned back to stare at her: . . . she has a look of innocence and artlessness that made me quite sorry she should be so foolishly negligent of her person." This severe critic adds that "the Duke, on whose arm the bride was leaning, was ugly, tidy, and grave-looking, like a very mean shopkeeper's journeyman." Truth to tell, the "greatest match in England," though he thought himself something of a dandy and a poet, must have acted very much as a foil to his fair bride. Mrs Delany says that the "jewel" her friend the Duchess had won had not been well polished; and Wraxall remarks that "constitutional apathy formed his most distinguished characteristic." In the fierce political struggle of 1783 and 1784—when the whole country was divided into two factions, each hating the other with a perfect hatred; and when, as Walpole said, "politics were all







Frances, Duchess of Devonshire

Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1768





THE HARVEST WAGON



LATER WORK AT BATH

in all, and little girls asked each other before they would make friends: 'Pray, miss, of which side are you?'—the biographers of Sir Joshua Reynolds tell how difficult it was for the great artist's sitters, who were most of them on the popular side, to get to his painting-room through the fighting mobs in Leicester Fields; but that the Duchess of Devonshire and her friend, Mrs Crewe, moved about like beings from another sphere, courting, cajoling, and canvassing on behalf of Fox. Rowlandson, that keen satirist of both parties to the contest, published a print called "Political Affections," in which the Duchess is represented nursing a Fox-cub, whilst her own child is wailing unnoticed in his cradle. Many, too, were the coarse, anonymous rhymes, reflecting on the Duchess's eager advocacy of Fox, which were circulated about the town. In one, she is even charged with having bought a vote from a certain Marrowbones, a butcher of Westminster, with a kiss; but in spite of all her efforts, all her condescensions, all her "thunderings at each door," Fox was defeated, and Baron Hood, later Viscount and Admiral, whose portrait Gainsborough also painted, was returned in his stead.

In 1791, two years before her own marriage to General D'Arblay, Fanny Burney, fresh from her drudgery as Keeper of the Robes at Court, met the Duchess of Devonshire and her children at Bath, and says of her: "I did not find so much beauty in her as I expected, . . . but I found far more of manner, politeness, and gentle spirit. She seems by nature to possess the highest animal spirits, but she appeared to me not happy. I thought she looked oppressed within, though there is a native cheerfulness about her which, I fancy, never deserts her." Whilst the two were conversing in what Fanny calls "a soberly, sensible, and quiet manner" on various topics, including the then delicate subject of the King's mental illness and the Queen's distress, the Duchess's little daughter, Lady Georgiana, who might have been the original of Gainsborough's first portrait of her mother, ran in with a request to be allowed to go into the garden to see some poor little girls eat a meal provided for them by her grandmother, Countess Spencer. No one who saw the Duchess's now worn but still beautiful face light up as she listened to the little maid's pleading, or who heard her express her fear that "there might be some illness or disorder amongst the poor things," could fail to feel how

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

utterly unfounded were the charges brought against her of being an unnatural mother, or how true it was that she found her best comfort for the loss of her husband's erratic affections in the care of her little ones.

About 1765 or 1766 Gainsborough was joined at Bath by his nephew, Gainsborough Dupont, whom he seems to have almost adopted as a son. Young Dupont, of whose life some details have already been given (see chapter i. p. 10), often worked on his uncle's pictures, and successfully engraved many of them. His original works were chiefly landscapes; but he also painted several portraits of considerable merit. The years succeeding his arrival at Bath saw the production of many of Gainsborough's finest landscapes, the exact date of which it is impossible to discover.

From about 1767 or 1768 are supposed to date several of his most important landscapes, including the *Market Cart* and the two *Watering Places* in the National Gallery, and the yet more celebrated *Harvest Waggon* now in the possession of Lord Tweedmouth. In all of them may be very clearly seen those marked peculiarities of manner which were so ably described by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his discourse, as President of the Academy, soon after Gainsborough's death: "All those odd scratches and marks, which on a close examination are so observable in Gainsborough's pictures, and which, even to experienced painters, appear rather the effect of accident than design—this chaos, this uncouth and shapeless appearance, by a kind of magic, at a certain distance, assume form, and all the parts seem to drop into their proper places; so that we can hardly refuse acknowledging the full effect of diligence, under the appearance of chance and hasty negligence."

In the *Harvest Waggon*, the artist has introduced the portraits of his two daughters as peasant-girls: Mary, the elder, the future Mrs Fischer, seated in the waggon; Margaret, the younger, who died unmarried, just about to climb into it. This picture was given by Gainsborough, with many another masterpiece, such as the portrait of the *Parish Clerk* already referred to, and that of Quin the actor (described in the last chapter), to Mr Wiltshire the carrier, who, the story goes, always refused to take payment for the work he did for the great artist, declaring that he loved pictures too well to wish to receive anything for carrying them; but adding that when he had carried to the value of



GAINSBOROUGH'S
TWO DAUGHTERS
(*unfinished*)





HEN AND CHICKENS
"An Hour's Sketch"



LATER WORK AT BATH

a small picture, perhaps Gainsborough would give him one. Another of the "small pictures" which fell to the lot of this most fortunate carrier was the *Landscape with Cattle and Figures*, belonging now to the same owner as the *Harvest Waggon*, which was bought of Wiltshire's heirs for £1800. The carrier had, however, been equally generous in his way; for, Gainsborough having expressed a wish to paint a favourite horse of his, he sent it to the artist as a gift, with all its harness on. It figures in the *Harvest Waggon* and in many other of the Bath landscapes.

The *Rural Courtship* and the *Hen and Chickens*—the latter said to have been produced in a single sitting—also date from about this time, as do several very fine portraits of the artist himself, his wife and daughters, and their various relations settled in Bath. One of the latter represents the nephew of the painter, Edward Gardiner, who was constantly in and out of the studio as a boy of twelve, and is specially interesting as the child wears a blue dress, and his uncle is supposed to have chosen to paint it as a trial of colour before he attempted the famous *Blue Boy*. The Rev. Edward Gardiner, to whom reference has already several times been made, is the grandson of this Edward Gardiner, and owns several other interesting heirlooms from the Bath time, including several very fine etchings, an unfinished portrait of Gainsborough's two daughters, which is of special value as showing the artists' mode of work; a group of Gainsborough and his wife, shown at the 1885 Exhibition, where it served to authenticate certain other likenesses on which doubt has been thrown; and a portrait of the painter's sister, Mrs Gardiner, which until within quite recent years was supposed to have been painted by Gainsborough Dupont. Mr W. P. Frith, R.A., however, who saw it at the Folkestone Exhibition said that he would stake his reputation on its being the work of Gainsborough himself, for "no other artist could have painted it."

To the Exhibition of 1767, at which Reynolds was conspicuous by his absence, Gainsborough sent portraits of Lady Grosvenor, John, Duke of Argyll, and of Mr Vernon, with a fine landscape with figures. This Lady Grosvenor, whose portrait Gainsborough painted at Bath, preceded Mrs Horton in the affections of the Royal Duke of Cumberland; and in a trial resulting from this amour, the Duke was

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

mulcted in heavy damages. It was on account of his later marriage with Mrs Horton that the Royal Marriage Act was passed in 1772, forbidding the descendants of the late king to marry without the Royal consent under the Great Seal.

Lady Grosvenor's name very often appears in the correspondence of the time, and, writing to the Duke of Hertford about what he calls "the entertaining petition of the periwig-makers, complaining that men *will* wear their own hair," Horace Walpole tells how her mother, Lady Harriet Vernon, quarrelled with him for "smelling at the enormous head-gear of her daughter." "She came," adds Walpole, "one night to Northumberland House with such a display of frizz that it literally spread beyond her shoulders. I happened to say it looked as if her parents had stinted her in hair before her marriage, and that she was determined to indulge her fancy now. This was repeated . . . to Lady Harriet, and occasioned my disgrace." In another letter to Sir Horace Mann, Walpole alludes to Lord Grosvenor having "discarded his wife, because of her intrigue with the Duke"; and Sir Joshua Reynolds' biographer tells how she used to meet her lover at an obscure country inn, where the Duke of Cumberland, on account of his clumsy manners, was taken for a country squire, and nicknamed "The Fool."

The Duke of Argyll, whose portrait by Gainsborough was at the same Exhibition as that of Lady Grosvenor, was the General John Campbell who succeeded the "Good Duke" of "The Heart of Midlothian" on that nobleman's death in 1745. He took a very active share in politics, though he exercised little permanent influence, and when he died, Walpole, writing to Sir Horace Mann, said: "The Duke of Argyll, commonly called the 'Great Duke,' is dead—a death of how little moment, and of how much it would have been a year or two ago! It is provoking, if one must die, that one can't even die *à propos*!"

It was probably also at Bath, before 1769, that the well-known likenesses were painted of Lord Frederick Campbell, son of the Duke just mentioned; of the Duke and Duchess of Montagu, and of Captains Needham and Hervey—the latter of whom became the Earl of Bristol. This portrait was characterised by Walpole as the best likeness he had ever seen.

Lord Frederick Campbell, whose mother was one of the



GAINSBOROUGH'S NEPHEW
Preliminary Study for a Blue Boy





*From the Mezzotint
by James Watson*

THE HON. AUGUSTUS HERVEY
EARL OF BRISTOL



LATER WORK AT BATH

beauties of the day, took an active share in politics, and was the friend and companion of the great statesman George Grenville. He married Mary, the widow of the unfortunate Lawrence, Earl Ferrers, who, in a fit of the ungovernable temper for which he was remarkable, killed his land-steward with his own hand, and having been tried in Westminster Hall by his fellow-peers, was hanged at Tyburn. His widow, as the wife of Lord Frederick, also came to a tragic end, for she was burnt to death in a fire at Coomb Bank, Kent, one of her second husband's residences.

Mary, Duchess of Montagu, whose portrait and that of the Duke Gainsborough asked Garrick to go and see as examples of his "latest manner," was the granddaughter of the great Duke of Marlborough, and the daughter of John, the second Duke of Montagu of the first creation. She married George Brudenell, Earl of Cardigan, who on the death of her father, was made Duke of Montagu. She was one of the most charming women of her day; and Walpole, writing to the Honourable H. S. Conway in 1748, said that he grew more in love with her every day. On her death in 1775, leaving no son, Walpole wrote to Sir Horace Mann: "My contemporaries seem going too. I have lost three of them very lately—Lady Milton, General Boscawen, and the Duchess of Montagu. I don't believe the latter's death will put the same thoughts into the widower's head as it has into mine; he will think of leaving a young duke before he packs up. The Duchess has given £7000 a year to her daughter, the Duchess of Buccleuch, and as much to the Duke, yet only for his life; so perhaps she was not very desirous of his leaving a son and heir."

Chapter VII.

LAST FEW YEARS AT BATH.

FOUNDATION OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY — FIRST EXHIBITION
— PORTRAIT OF LORD CHESTERFIELD — GAINSBOROUGH'S
WORKS AT THE 1770 EXHIBITION — BENJAMIN WEST AND
HIS "DEATH OF WOLFE" — LATER LANDSCAPES BY GAINSBOROUGH — PORTRAITS OF MISS TYLER, MRS MACAULAY,
MRS ELLIOT, LORD CAMDEN, AND CHATTERTON.

WHILST Gainsborough was still working quietly at Bath, his fame ever on the increase, something very like a revolution was taking place in the art-world of London, which, through the foundation of the Royal Academy, now first became a recognised art-centre, even in the eyes of foreign critics, with whom it had so long been the fashion to decry everything English. The old Society of Artists, which had received its Royal Charter in 1765, had long been torn to pieces by the quarrels of its members; the fatal mistake having been made of the admission of too large a number of outsiders, who, knowing nothing of art or the conditions under which alone good work could be produced, brought constant confusion and discord into the councils of the Society. Something very like mob rule had begun to prevail, and even those most attached to the old order of things had long felt that nothing could save the Incorporated Society of Artists from dissolution but an immediate and radical reform. Such a reform was, however, soon found to be impossible; and twenty-nine members of the Society, including Sir William Chambers, the great architect; Benjamin West, the historical painter; and Wilson, the landscape painter, determined to endeavour to found another Academy, which should be free from all the disadvantages of the old, and be governed by what may be called an aristocracy of artists, chosen from the most eminent painters, sculptors, and architects of Europe. The exclusion of foreigners even

LAST FEW YEARS AT BATH

from the directorate does not seem to have occurred to any-one; a proof that, though public opinion had been modified with regard to native work, it still required considerable further education before full justice would be done to any artists of British birth but portrait painters.

It was felt that the new Academy would have no chance of success unless it could secure the patronage of the King; and Sir William Chambers, in a private interview with His Majesty, impressed him so favourably that, in spite of his attachment to the old Society, of which his and Gainsborough's old friend, Joshua Kirby, was then director, George III. promised to consider any scheme the seceders chose to put before him. In November 1768 the rough draft of a constitution was laid before the King, and in December of the same year he gave his final sanction to the instrument of foundation. The selection of the first members and the nomination of a President was all that now remained to be done; and the King himself seems to have chosen thirty out of the forty names in the first list. It is remarkable that neither Reynolds nor Gainsborough, who were undoubtedly then acknowledged to be the greatest of English artists, took any active share in the drawing up of the constitution of the new Academy. Reynolds, disgusted at the bickerings of the old Society, had long since ceased to attend its meetings. He was, moreover, no favourite at Court, having always sided with the Opposition, and must have felt that his name would do his fellow-artists no good with the King. Gainsborough, on the other hand, did not appear simply because of his invincible repugnance to meddling in any public matter; his enrolment as a member of the Royal Academy took place, if not actually without reference to him, still without any formal sanction from him, and in the earliest list of members his name was not given, although his work appeared at the first Exhibition, and his name in the catalogue had the magic letters R.A. after it.

In spite of the absence, or perhaps because of the absence, of the name of Joshua Reynolds from the scheme submitted to him, George III. seems to have taken the new Society into his affections from the first, speaking of it as his own Academy, as if he had never granted a charter to any other. Whilst the negotiations with him were going forward, Benjamin West,

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

who was his favourite artist, was painting for him, and in accordance with his directions, the picture of *Regulus*, which made such a stir at the first Academy Exhibition. The King showed this picture to Joshua Kirby at the Palace, and the director of the old Society of Artists, who appears to have been in complete ignorance of what was going on, and of the approaching supersession of the body over which he presided, said that he hoped His Majesty would graciously allow his subjects to see the picture at the Exhibition—"Certainly, certainly," said the King; but when Kirby added—"of the Incorporated Society," he cried angrily, "No, no, no! at the Exhibition of my *own* Academy!" The cruel blow thus dealt at the prosperity of the Society with which he had been so long associated is said to have hastened the end of poor Joshua Kirby. He seems, however, to have done his best to rally the spirits of those members of the body over which he presided who had not yet seceded, and their exhibitions were held simultaneously with those of their rivals at the Academy until some years after his death, which occurred in 1774, the year of the arrival in London of Gainsborough, whom he had so effectually befriended in the old days at Ipswich.

Whether the King did or did not aid in the selection of the original members of "his own Academy," the final list included the name of Reynolds; and all were agreed in wishing to nominate him their first president. It speaks well for George III. that, in spite of his prejudice against the great portrait painter, he made no objection to this choice, and even did what he could to pave the way by promising to have his own portrait taken by Reynolds if he would consent to accept the dignity offered. Reynolds had, however, so far turned a deaf ear to all the blandishments of those who had tried to draw him into the preliminary proceedings. He had no wish to appear anxious to court the favour of royalty; and his time was so fully occupied that he was reluctant to undertake any fresh responsibilities. When Penny, the portrait painter, soon to be the first Professor of Painting in the new Institution, and Moser, the worker in enamel and gold chaser, who became first Keeper of the Academy, called to invite the great artist to a meeting of the forty members at the house of the sculptor, Wilton, he refused to go. Even when the unsuccessful messengers were succeeded by Benjamin West, who told Reynolds that he had been chosen president, he



DOROTHEA, LADY EDEN





FROM A PENCIL SKETCH



LAST FEW YEARS AT BATH

replied that Joshua Kirby had assured him there was no such thing as a New Academy. West, however, insisted, and Reynolds finally consented to go and see what all the excitement was about. West called for Reynolds in due course, and the two arrived at the meeting rather late, just as the members were beginning to despair of seeing them, and were discussing what further inducements they could hold out to win the president on whom they had all set their hearts. When at last the door opened and Reynolds appeared, he was greeted with acclamations, and hailed as president. The enthusiasm of his brother artists broke down his reserve. He accepted the appointment, and then and there the final code was drawn up, read, and passed unanimously.* The next day, December 10th, 1768, the King gave his formal sanction to everything proposed, and the Royal Academy of Arts was finally instituted. Its first general meeting was held on the following 14th December; on the 18th a supplementary list of officers, visitors, professors, etc., was submitted to the King. On January 2nd of the following year the first lecture was delivered by Reynolds. On the 21st of April he was knighted at the levée at St James', and on the 26th of the same month the first Exhibition was opened in humble quarters in Pall Mall, previously used as a print warehouse and auction rooms, and later occupied by Christie, the well-known auctioneer.

The original members of the Academy, which was to have such a long and prosperous career, and to migrate successively to Somerset House, Trafalgar Square, and Piccadilly, included, in addition to Joshua Reynolds, president, and Sir William Chambers, treasurer, George Moser, Francis Newton, Edward Penny, Thomas Sandby, Samuel Wade, William Hunter, M.D., Francis Hayman, George Barrett, Edward Burch, Charles Cotton, Richard Cosway, Francesco Bartolozzi, Agostino Cipriani, Mason Chamberlain, Angelica Kauffman, Jeremiah Meyer, Joseph Nollekins, John Richards, Paul Sandby, Peter Tims, William Tyler, Benjamin West, Richard Wilson, Joseph Wilton, Richard Yeo, John Zoffany, and Francesco Zuccarelli. To these artists Reynolds a little later added, with the approval of the King, a few honorary members, including Dr Franklin as chaplain; Dr Johnson and Dr Goldsmith as

*The story of Sir Joshua Reynolds' election as president is variously told, but the account given here appears the best authenticated.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

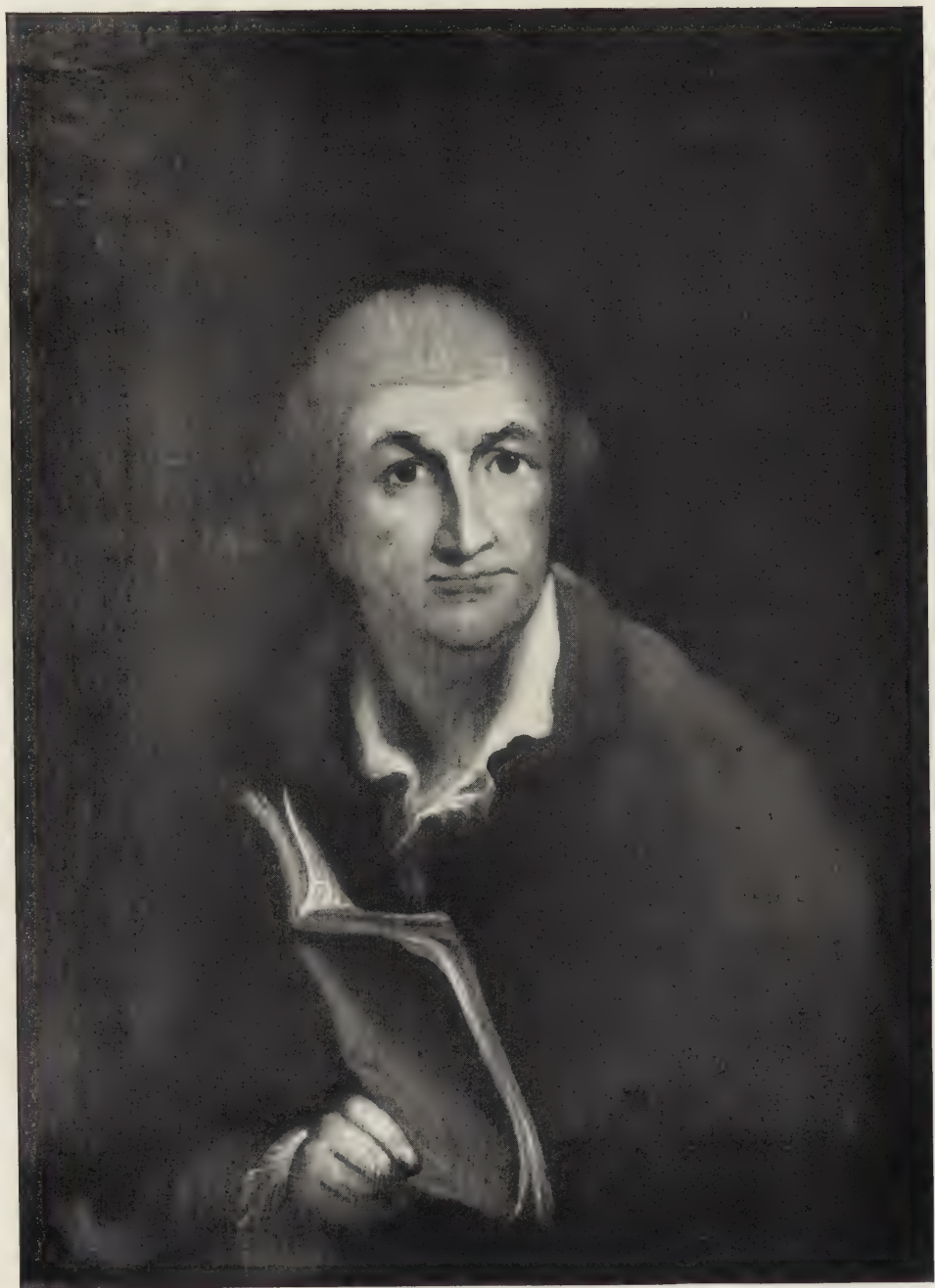
professors of ancient literature; and Richard Dalton as antiquary. Goldsmith, however, declined to accept the honour, saying that to him such a compliment was like ruffles to a man who had no shirt.

The first Exhibition of the Royal Academy, which was open for one month only, was an eminently remarkable one. It was ushered in by the first of that admirable series of "Discourses" from the President which are still of so much value to the art-student, on account of the practical wisdom of the advice contained in them. After a few graceful complimentary words for the King, and a brief summary of the aims of the new institution, Sir Joshua launched forth into an eloquent warning to young artists against the frivolous ambition which led so many to evade the toil required to achieve excellence, telling them that "labour is the only price of solid fame, and that whatever their force of genius may be, there is no easy method of becoming a good painter." He further urged the importance of correct drawing from the living model, saying, how truly was scarcely realised then, that the "grace and beauty of a finished work" having the human frame for its subject could only be attained by an "attentive and well-compared study of the human form." He wound up a lecture, listened to with strained attention, for his deafness led him to speak very low, with the expression of a wish "that the present age may vie in arts with that of Leo X." and, quoting Pliny, "that the dignity of the dying art may be revived in the reign of George III."

The Exhibition included Reynolds' *Duchess of Manchester and her son as Diana disarming Cupid*, with other works; West's *Regulus* and *Venus mourning the Death of Adonis*; whilst Gainsborough was represented by *A large Landscape*, *A Boy's Head*, two so-called fancy subjects which it has been found impossible to identify, and portraits of Lady Molyneux and of George Pitt, son of Earl Rivers, which Walpole characterised as "very like."

The "Lady Molyneux," whose portrait Horace Walpole pronounced to be "ungraceful," seems to have been the same *Lady Monoux* who sat to Reynolds in 1761, 1769, and 1770, and was one of the foundresses in 1770 of the club at Almack's, already referred to in the account of the Countess of Spencer (p. 63).

It was also in 1769, the year of the foundation of the



*From the Portrait
in the Common Room,
Christchurch, Oxford*

DAVID GARRICK



LAST FEW YEARS AT BATH

Royal Academy, that Gainsborough painted the fine likeness of the celebrated statesman and art patron, Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, that typical representative of the manners of his time, of courtly and dignified bearing, but of lax morality, who is best known to posterity by the letters to his natural son Philip. About the same time as he took the portrait of Lord Chesterfield, Gainsborough made the celebrated copy of the portrait of Jacob, Viscount Folkestone, First President of the Society of Arts, by Sir Joshua Reynolds' master, Hudson, at the request of the Society over which the viscount presided so long. For this copy the artist received one hundred guineas, "his usual price for a full-length," and a note of thanks telling him "that the Society were" highly satisfied with his masterly performance. The picture was hung as a pendant to Sir Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Lord Romney, who succeeded Lord Folkestone as President on that nobleman's death in 1771.

To the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1770 Gainsborough sent six characteristic works, viz.: one large landscape and five portraits, with a book of drawings, which must have been of special interest as showing his mode of work at the time. The portraits were designated in the catalogue as a "three-quarter-length of Garrick," pronounced by Horace Walpole to have been "very like," a portrait of a lady and child, a portrait of a gentleman, a ditto of a gentleman, and a ditto of a young gentleman; but, with the exception of the Garrick, it is impossible to identify the various "dittos" with any certainty. One of them, however, "in a Vandyck habit," was specially admired, and contemporary letters contain many references to it. Writing to Fuseli, who became an Associate of the Royal Academy the year of Gainsborough's death, Mary Moser, R.A., the clever flower painter, says: "I suppose there has been a million of letters sent to Italy on account of our Exhibition, so it will be only telling you what you know already to say Reynolds was like himself, . . . Gainsborough beyond himself, in the portrait of a gentleman in a Vandyck habit."

This second Exhibition, as did that of the preceding year, drew crowds, the receipts at the door reaching the sum of £971, 6s., nearly half as much again as in 1769. "Coates, Dancer, Wilson, etc.," says Miss Moser in the letter quoted

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

above, "were as usual; Angelica Kauffmann made a very great addition to the show; and Zoffany was superior to everybody in a portrait of Garrick as Abel Drugger."

In 1771 the first dinner at the Royal Academy was presided over by Sir Joshua, and the Institution migrated to the fine apartments given to it in Somerset House by the King. The Exhibition was, however, still held in Pall Mall, and in it Gainsborough was represented by two fine landscapes with figures, and five full-length portraits, viz.: of Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland; Lady Sussex and her child, Lord Ligonier on horseback, Lady Ligonier in fancy dress, Captain Wade, who succeeded Beau Nash as Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, and Mr Nuthall.

This first portrait of Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, one of the King's brothers, was painted when His Royal Highness was in disgrace at Court, owing to his intrigue with Lady Grosvenor (referred to in chapter vi.). The Duke was the least popular and the most dissipated of all the Royal Family, and was continually outraging even the lax society of the day by his escapades. Already, almost before the excitement caused by the trial of the Cumberland-Grosvenor case had subsided, he had fallen in love with the notorious Mrs Horton, widow of the Colonel Luttrell who had opposed Wilkes for Middlesex, and, though the former was elected, had sat in his stead. In November of the year of the exhibition of Gainsborough's first portrait of him, the Duke of Cumberland married Mrs Horton, and went off to Calais with her, whence he informed George III. of what he had done. The passing of the Royal Marriage Act in 1772 was mainly the result of this so-called *mésalliance*, though the Duke's bride seems to have been, with all her faults, far superior to her husband. The newly-married pair sat to Sir Joshua Reynolds not long after their return from their honeymoon; and it is related that the Duchess tried in vain to induce the Duke to say something polite to the great artist. He hemmed and ha'ad and worried the painter by looking over his shoulder as he worked; but all he could think of to say was, "What! eh, so you always begin with the head, do you?"

In 1777 Gainsborough exhibited at the Royal Academy portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, and in 1779 a second portrait of the Duchess, who, in spite of the



*From a Photograph by
Braun Clément & Cie.
Dornach (Alsace), Paris, & New York*

DUKE AND DUCHESS
OF CUMBERLAND



LAST FEW YEARS AT BATH

royal ban on her marriage, seems to have been well received in Society. It is related that in 1778, when Goldsmith's play of "She Stoops to Conquer" was acted for the first time, a burst of applause greeted Hastings' speech to Miss Neville in the second act, when he proposes to her that they "should fly to France, where even among slaves the laws of marriage are respected." This the audience chose to take as a compliment to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, who were present, but it is doubtful whether Goldsmith had given them a thought.

There is considerable difference of opinion as to whether the portrait of Lady Sussex and her child, exhibited in 1771, was that lent by the Rev. J. M. St Clere Raymond to the 1885 Exhibition of Gainsborough's works, or that lent on the same occasion by Lord Donington. Both are, however, supposed to represent Hester, Countess of Sussex, who died in 1777, and her daughter Lady Barbara Yelverton.

Lord Ligonier, who, when Gainsborough painted him, was a notable figure in the fashionable world, had been, when only Sir John, *aide-de-camp* to Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick at the Battle of Minden; and in that capacity was the bearer of the despatches containing the news of the great victory over the French won by Prince Ferdinand and Lord George Sackville. At the court-martial held on the conduct of the latter in the campaign, Lord Ligonier was the chief witness against the unfortunate English commander. Lord Ligonier was one of the most ardent admirers of Kitty Fisher, that lovely daughter of a German corset-maker who turned the heads of all the young maccaroni of the day. The story goes that on one occasion Kitty was introduced in Hyde Park, in the presence and with the connivance of George III., by Lord Ligonier, to the great William Pitt, on whose private character no slur had ever been cast even by his most inveterate political enemies. "Who is that lady?" the King is reported to have asked of Lord Ligonier, receiving the answer: "The Duchess of N——, a foreign lady, whom the secretary ought to know." "Well, well!" was the reply; "introduce him." Lord Ligonier did so, the courtiers looking on in the hope of an amusing scene, for well they knew the esteem in which the stern statesman held the courtesan. They were disappointed, for Pitt seeing the snare laid for him, merely bowed low, and expressed his regret that he had not had the honour of knowing the

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

lady when he was a young man, adding that now he was "old and infirm he could only avoid the force of her beauty by flying from it." He then turned on his heel and walked away.

Lord Ligonier married twice. His first wife, Penelope, the daughter of George Pitt, Earl Rivers, whose portrait by Gainsborough was exhibited in 1771, seems to have retaliated on her husband for his infidelity by flirtations of her own; for that same year (1771) Lord Ligonier fought a duel on her behalf in Hyde Park with the Italian poet Alfieri, later the devoted lover of the Countess of Albany, the unfortunate wife of Prince Charlie, with whom Alfieri lived after the death of the Pretender in 1788 till his own death in 1803. The countess, though she was far from faithful to the memory of her poet lover, was buried by his side in the Church of Santa Croce at Florence.

The Mr Nuthall whose portrait was exhibited with those of Lord and Lady Ligonier was the intimate friend and supporter of Pitt. He was attacked on his way from Bath to London, in 1775, by a highwayman on Hounslow Heath; and though he escaped unhurt, he died suddenly in the inn at Hounslow a few hours afterwards, as he sat writing an account of his adventure.

The Exhibition of 1771 was a notable one in the history of Art. The receipts at the door were no less than £1125; and amongst many fine pictures, such as three landscapes by Wilson, two classic subjects and three portraits by the President, with the works by Gainsborough described above, appeared the famous *Death of Wolfe* by Benjamin West, which was the very first attempt made in England to represent a modern historical event exactly as it occurred. The rage for mythological subjects was then at its height, and the canker of classicism had eaten into the very core of original production. Gainsborough, alone of portrait painters, to his honour be it said, stood out against the prevailing fashion and painted those who sat to him in their own characters, not as Psyches and Cupids, Dianas and Junos, the Graces, or the Fates. To illustrate the extent of the evil, for evil it undoubtedly was, it is but necessary to quote some half-dozen of the titles in the 1771 Exhibition alone: The President's *Venus and Cupid* hung in a place of honour on the line of the principal wall; Angelica Kauffmann sent subjects from Ovid



*From the Mezzotint
by John Dean*

MRS ELLIOTT



LAST FEW YEARS AT BATH

and from the "Odyssey"; Richard Cosway showed a lady and her daughters as *Virtue and Beauty sacrificing to Diana*, whilst even West made up for the bold innovation of his *Death of Wolfe* by canvases bearing the orthodox titles of the *Death of Procris*, the *Continence of Scipio*, and *Hector and Andromache*.

When the rumour got about in London that West was painting a picture in which the actors were represented in modern costume, the greatest excitement prevailed. The King, who was devoted to West, and had bought many of his pictures, determined to mark his displeasure by cold neglect; the Archbishop of York called on the President of the Academy to ask if there were any truth in the terrible news; whilst Academicians and associates shook their heads over the recalcitrancy of their comrade, declaring that they would none of them have anything to do with him in future.

West himself tells how the Archbishop of York and Sir Joshua Reynolds came together to remonstrate with him. "Reynolds," he says, "began a very ingenious and elegant dissertation on the state of the public taste in this country, and the danger which every innovation incurred of contempt and ridicule, and concluded by urging me earnestly to adopt the costume of antiquity, as more becoming the greatness of my subject than the modern garb of European warriors. I answered that the event to be commemorated happened in the year 1758, in a region of the world unknown to the Greeks and Romans, and at a period of time when no warriors who wore such costume existed. The subject I have to represent is a great battle fought and won, and the same truth which gives law to the historian should rule the painter. If, instead of the facts of the action, I introduce fiction, how shall I be understood by posterity? The classic dress is certainly picturesque; but by using it I shall lose in sentiment what I gain in external grace—I want to mark the place, the time, and the people, and to do this I must abide by truth. They went away then, and returned when I had the picture finished. Reynolds seated himself before the picture, examined it with deep and minute attention for half-an-hour, then rising, said to Drummond, 'West has conquered; he has treated the subject as it ought to be treated. I retract my objections. I foresee that this picture will not only become one of the most popular, but will occasion a revolution in art.'"

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

When West told the King "all about it," that astute monarch regretted his hasty determination not to buy the picture, and exclaimed: "I wish I had known of this before." Lord Grosvenor, more enlightened than most of his contemporaries, bought the *Death of Wolfe* before it was exhibited, and the King had to be content with a copy which he now ordered West to make for him. Four years later, Barry, the historical painter, whose irritable temper led to his expulsion from the Academy, marked his contempt of West's innovation by exhibiting a *Death of Wolfe* in which the actors in the historic drama were all represented nude; but the tide had then altogether turned against false classicism, and the reception of Barry's work was as chill as his unclothed figures would themselves have been on the northern battlefield so late in the year as September, when Quebec was won.

To the Academy of 1772 Gainsborough sent no less than ten landscape drawings and four portraits; but which they were, it is unfortunately impossible to identify, though the third likeness of Garrick was probably one of the latter. These were his last contributions to the Academy from Bath; and in the picture by Zoffany, which was the most popular work of the year, representing the *Academicians gathered about the model of the Life School at Somerset House*, he was conspicuous by his absence. From the first, Gainsborough's attitude towards the institution of the Academy had been coldly indifferent. As already stated, he had been elected, if not exactly against his will, yet without his consent; and the probability is that he was not satisfied with the way in which his work was hung, and marked his disapproval by simply abstaining from sending again until he had received some sort of expression of regret. No such expression reaching him, he contented himself with working quietly on at Bath for another two years; and it was probably during the latter part of his stay there that he took the portrait of the second Viscount Bateman, for whom, when on a visit to him at Shobdon Court, Herefordshire, he also painted the celebrated landscape known as *Going to Market*, which is considered his finest work of the kind, and is still in the possession of the Bateman family. Other works which were painted at the end of the stay at Bath, though it is impossible to say exactly when, were the *Woodland Scene*, the various landscapes known as *The Cottage Door*, in which





LAST FEW YEARS AT BATH

the general scheme is the same, though the details vary ; the *Pack-Horse Bridge*, the *Landscape with Horses Ploughing*, the *Landscape with Figures against a Tree*, the *Sand-Getters*, the *Cottage Girl*, the *Wood Scene near Corfe*, the *Gipsies*, with many other fine works named simply "Landscapes," which, with others, were exhibited together in 1885 at the Grosvenor Gallery.

From quite the end of the Bath period date the fine portraits of Miss Tyler, the aunt of Robert Southey, at whose house at Bath the poet lived as a child ; of Viscount Kilmorey ; of the lady historian, Mrs Catherine Macaulay, whose works, though never read now, were greatly admired during her lifetime ; and of the fair, but frail, Mrs Grace Elliott *née* Dalrymple, whose likeness is now in the possession of the Duke of Portland.

It appears to have been during a short visit to Bath that the great lawyer, Lord Camden, sat to Gainsborough. As Chief-Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, Lord Camden, then only plain Mr Charles Pratt, had decided in 1761 against the legality of the proceedings of the Duke of Grafton's Government with regard to the sturdy rebel, John Wilkes ; and contemporary correspondence is full of references to the struggle in which Chief-Justice Pratt took so determined a part against the Government. Created Baron Camden in 1765, and Lord Chancellor in 1766, by Lord Rockingham's Administration, he vigorously opposed his colleagues' policy in America, which led to the loss of the British colonies there ; and he continued to defend and protect John Wilkes all through the restless career of that popular hero, who, whether as a member of the disreputable brotherhood of the "Monks of Medmenham," founded by Sir Francis Dashwood, or as a political agitator, kept himself constantly before the public. In 1770 the great lawyer opposed the return of Colonel Luttrell for Middlesex, when Wilkes had a majority of votes ; and it was this which cost him his position and led to his retirement for a time to Bath, where he first met Gainsborough. He took office again in the second Rockingham Cabinet, in 1782, as Lord President of the Council, retaining that position under Pitt till his death in 1794. It was of this Lord Camden that Goldsmith complained at Dr Johnson's table that "he took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man," when his host said to the amused company, "I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him."

Chapter VIII.

RETURN TO LONDON.

ARRIVAL AT SCHOMBERG HOUSE—POLITICAL SITUATION IN 1774—
GREAT CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS AND CELEBRATED SINGERS—
PRINCE ORLOFF, JAMES BRUCE, AND OMIAH—REVOLUTION
IN ENGLISH ART—SCHEME FOR DECORATION OF ST PAUL'S
—LANDSCAPE PAINTERS AND THEIR POSITION IN 1774
—EXHIBITION OF 1774—GAINSBOROUGH AND SIR JOSHUA
REYNOLDS—ABEL, GARRICK, AND FISCHER AGAIN—DEATH OF
HUMPHREY AND MARRIAGE OF MARY GAINSBOROUGH.

IN 1774 Gainsborough and his friends seem to have agreed in the expediency of a change from Bath, where the great artist had now been working steadily for just upon fifteen years, reaping a golden harvest, not only in money, but in reputation. His daughters, though no longer in their earliest bloom, were still lovely young women, and their mother probably felt that their chances of a good establishment would be greater in London than they had been even in the gay city of Bath. Possibly, too, she knew and disapproved of Mary's penchant for the erratic musician, Fischer, and hoped to get her away from the familiar scenes of their first love-making. However that may be, she appears to have been ignorant of the fact that her *bête noire* was even then in London, all too ready to avail himself again of the *entrée* into the Gainsborough's house which had been given to him at Bath.

The faithful Mr Wiltshire now received his last commission from his generous patron: one which must have been undertaken with deep regret. He was instructed to remove all the Gainsboroughs' goods and chattels to London; and was probably, as usual, paid in kind, though there is no record of what he received. Neither is it known whether the artist and his family travelled by coach through the southern counties, or by boat from Bristol along the coast. All the biographers have to relate is that they arrived safely in London some time



MR AND MRS DELAUNEY
AND THEIR DAUGHTER



RETURN TO LONDON

in 1774, and took up their abode in part of Schomberg House, Pall Mall, which Gainsborough had secured at the rent of £300 a year—an incidental proof of his prosperous circumstances. The other half of this palatial residence was occupied by John Astley, a portrait painter of little note, who had married a wealthy widow.

Gainsborough was now forty-seven years old, and thirty years had elapsed since he had left the metropolis with little but youth and hope in his favour, after his unsatisfactory experiences as a student in St Martin's Lane Academy and the atelier of Hayman. That roystering artist was still alive; but had outlived fortune and fame, though he still kept up a good heart, and earned enough to live on as librarian of the Royal Academy. He welcomed Gainsborough, of whom he could not but be proud, with enthusiasm, and the greater artist was not slow to acknowledge his obligations to him in the days gone by. Hudson, Sir Joshua Reynolds' old master, also lingered on; and possibly he and Hayman, who were, of course, acquainted with each other, may sometimes have discussed together the respective merits of their illustrious pupils.

As soon as Gainsborough opened his studio in Schomberg House, he became an immediate rival to Reynolds, attracting all the notables of the day, who flocked as eagerly to have their portraits painted first by one, and then by another artist, as if the perpetuation of their features were the only thing of importance to be considered. Yet all London was torn with conflicting emotions. The year before Wilkes had been prosecuted for a libel on the King; the first "Letters of Junius" had roused the most eager curiosity as to their author, not even now discovered; and the riots at Boston had been the answer of the Colonies to Lord North's enforcement of the duty on tea. Against this unfortunate policy in America, as against other short-sighted political measures affecting home politics, the great orator Edmund Burke was thundering out his eloquent protests in the House of Commons, following up by word of mouth his able pamphlets on the "Present State of the Nation" and "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontent," in which were so thoroughly sifted all the issues of the great controversy concerning Wilkes, and the action of the Government with regard to him. In 1774 Burke was joined in Opposition by Charles James Fox, who, in 1772, had lost his office as one of the Lords of the

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Admiralty, owing to a quarrel with Lord North on the subject of the American policy of the Government.

In the world of letters, as in that of politics, the year 1774 was a sad and anxious one, marked by the deaths of Oliver Goldsmith and of Alexander Pope. Goldsmith, that child-like genius who, but for the help of the many friends his engaging qualities won for him, would probably never have succeeded in publishing any of his immortal works, died in poverty and debt on the 4th of April; Pope, the poet-artist, whom Sir Joshua Reynolds so greatly loved, followed the author of "The Vicar of Wakefield" to the grave on May 30th, leaving behind him more enemies than friends, owing to his vanity and vindictive temper. The brilliant social circle of which Dr Johnson, then in his sixty-fifth year, was the idol and central figure, was, however, still scarcely broken into, though he himself was becoming more and more subject to the attacks of his terrible enemy, melancholia; and soon that circle was to be joined by other luminaries then just beginning to rise above the literary horizon, for Gainsborough's old friends, the newly-married Sheridans, had just settled in London; the "Rivals" was to be produced in January of the following year; and Fanny Burney, then only twenty-two years old, whilst ostensibly giving all her working time to the transcribing of her father's "History of Music," was evolving the plot of her "Evelina," which, four years later, was to take the world by storm. At Ranelagh, at Vauxhall, at the Pantheon, or the Opera—all of which had been opened since Gainsborough's first visit to London—the Burneys probably often rubbed shoulders with the great painter's party, for not to be seen at these popular places of resort was to be quite out of the world of fashion and of art. Together they may have listened to the singing of the witty and versatile Rauzzini; of the lovely Signora Ajugari, surnamed the *Bastardini*, according to Fanny Burney, "from some misfortune which preceded her birth"; the wife of Colla, the composer, who received one hundred pounds a night at the Pantheon for singing two songs only; the not less beautiful Signora Gabrielli, who so often drove the manager of the Opera nearly mad by her refusal to appear at the last moment; and Signor Pacchierotti, "the first, most finished, most estimable of singers, whom even Mrs Sheridan could never listen to without tears."



MRS MOODEY
AND HER CHILDREN



RETURN TO LONDON

Though they do not seem to have cared for admission to the magic circle of the *élite* of the highest ton, where Prince Orloff, the murderer of Peter III., openly paraded the diamond-circled portrait of his victim's widow, the Empress Catherine, and where James Bruce, surnamed His Majesty of Abyssinia, told to incredulous ears the romantic story of his discovery of the sources of the Blue Nile, the Gainsboroughs must often have met these two *lyons* of the day, as Charlotte Burney called them, in the Mall, the public gardens, or the streets. Many a greeting, too, did they probably exchange with that other *lyon*, the untutored savage Omiah, whom Captain Cook had brought from Otaheite with him on his return from his first voyage round the world, to be fêted and caressed by all the great people in London before he was taken back to his own land to die neglected and forgotten, for the famous navigator himself, with Captain Parsons, who was later to witness his murder, were among the many sailors who flocked to Gainsborough's studio to have their portraits painted for their wives or sweethearts before they again started on their perilous voyages.

Far more marked and palpable, however, than any other change which had taken place between Gainsborough's student life and his arrival in London as a celebrated painter was the revolution which had been effected in English art and in the estimation by the public of native work ; a revolution begun by Hogarth and carried on by Wilson and by Reynolds, by West and by Barry, by Ramsay and by Romney. True, it was still foreign work which secured the highest prices, and a Guido would fetch thousands where a Reynolds secured but hundreds, yet a distinct progress had been made, as was marked by the reception of the offer made the year before Gainsborough settled in Pall Mall for the decoration of St Paul's Cathedral by the chief Academicians, headed by the President. This deeply significant suggestion was received with encouragement by the King, with enthusiasm by the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral, with acclamation by the general public, but, unfortunately, with cold scorn by the Bishop of London, with whom the final decision rested. In vain the artists pleaded, offering to be content with no further reward for their labours but such sums as could be raised by keeping open the Academy a fortnight longer for two or three years : the Bishop was inexorable, and the scheme fell

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

through. Abortive though it had been, however, it marked the rising of the tide of popular appreciation of art, and showed a public spirit in the great painters of the day such as has rarely been equalled.

Though the advance made in landscape was not as great as that in portraiture and in historical painting, the years of Gainsborough's absence had been marked by considerable progress even in that direction. The royal and noble personages who came to his studio still deigned not a glance at the beautiful natural scenes which lined the walls of the passages leading to it; but even in the Academy, that ultra-conservative institution, the proportion of honest landscapes taken direct from Nature was far greater than it had ever been before. Sales of pure landscape work were still rare; but some few true art-critics were already prophesying a great future for English landscape art. Wilson's excellence was now generally acknowledged, and his continued poverty was mainly the result of his own mismanagement of his affairs, for the dealers made large sums out of his pictures; Master George Morland's clever *plein air* "sketches of pig-sties and their inmates, farmyards, and remote smuggler-haunted country nooks" found many admirers, and even purchasers; the German De Louthembourg, the skilful painter of scenery for Drury Lane Theatre, made a competent income by his work; and George Barret, the Irishman, realised quite a fortune by the sale of his small landscape studies and etchings, which are still highly esteemed by connoisseurs for their faithfulness to Nature and spirited execution.

To the 1774 Exhibition at the Academy, which Horace Walpole characterised as a very indifferent one, Gainsborough sent nothing. He seems still to have cherished some little bitterness against his fellow-Academicians; and though on his arrival in London they paid him the compliment of electing him a member of their council of management, and one vote was actually given for him to be President, he took absolutely no notice of the honour done him, never attending a meeting or recording a vote, no matter how important the matter under discussion. Worse even than that, though Sir Joshua Reynolds called on him as soon as he was settled in his new home, he did not return the call. It is just possible that there may have been some real excuse for this hostile attitude on the part of Gainsborough to all persons and things



LORD MOUNTMORRES



RETURN TO LONDON

Academical ; but, if so, there is absolutely no record of any circumstances explaining it. The great rivals were both men of sunny tempers and loving natures, in which no petty jealousies could find a place : whilst each cordially admired the work of the other. "Damn him," said Gainsborough on one occasion, *à propos* of Sir Joshua's numerous contributions to the Academy ; "how various he is." "I cannot think how he produces his effects," said Reynolds, when looking at a portrait by his rival ; and again and again later, in spite of years of neglect from Gainsborough, Reynolds spoke of him as the best landscape painter of Europe ; dwelling often, to young students, on the meaning and forcible effect of every one of the queer hatchings and dashes which at first sight seemed so inexplicable in the Suffolk artist's work.

It is said that, in spite of Gainsborough's marked coldness to him, Sir Joshua Reynolds much wished that he should paint his portrait, and appointments were even made for sittings at Schomberg House on November 3rd and 10th of 1782. It would appear, however, that Sir Joshua only sat once ; a dangerous illness, necessitating a visit to Bath, having seized him between the two dates named above. The President returned to London perfectly restored to health at the end of November, and duly acquainted Gainsborough with the fact ; but again there was no response, and the unfinished sketch of the great portrait painter's head remained untouched, with its face to the wall. Truly, this irresponsive silence with regard to every effort at *rapprochement* with him from his only rival was anything but golden on the part of Gainsborough.

In London, as before at Bath, it was not from amongst the great ones of the earth, whether their greatness was that of genius or the result of the mere accident of birth, that Gainsborough chose his friends ; and even those celebrated actors and authors who were admitted to his intimacy owed that privilege, not to the works which had contributed so much to their fame, but to their geniality and love of music. Again Garrick, Abel, and Fischer, with Garrick's first manager, Colman, the Sheridans, and Johann Christian Bach, son of the greater Sebastian Bach, were almost daily guests at his table, where they constantly met the great artist's much-loved brother, Humphrey. Gainsborough's eyes were still, it would appear, unopened to the attachment between Fischer and his daughter Mary, and Mrs Gainsborough seems to have been equally

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

blind ; for the famous player on the hautbois was always sure of a welcome at Schomberg House, and never refused to gratify his hosts by playing to them, though he is said to have left some great nobleman's table in a rage, on being asked if he had brought his instrument with him, with the scornful words : "No, my lord ; my hautbois never sups !"

Many stories are told of the ardour with which Gainsborough pursued his second love, music, even when overwhelmed with work in London, giving up to it much of the time he might have spent in the country, for which, all through his prosperous career as a portrait painter, he never ceased to pine. Bach, who, as conductor of concerts and player on various instruments, achieved a considerable reputation in London, used to amuse his friends with accounts of the anguish Gainsborough inflicted on him by his determined struggles with the wind instruments he never learnt to manage, though he acquired a certain amount of skill on the piano and the violin. "One day," says Bach, "when I called on him in Pall Mall, I found him fagging at the bassoon, an instrument that requires the wind of a forge-bellows to blow. His face was puffed, and as round and red as the harvest moon." The musician watched him for a few minutes in suppressed amusement, and then urged him to put the instrument down, "for it was only fit for the lungs of a blacksmith." "Nay, now," answered Gainsborough, "it is the richest bass in the world. Now listen again !" "Listen," cried Bach ; "I did listen at your door, and by all the powers above, as I hope to be saved, it is just for all the world as the veritable braying of a jackass." "Damn it," retorted Gainsborough ; "why, you have no ear, man ; no more than an adder." "He then," continues Bach, "tried the clarionet, on which he made a noise nearly as excruciating as he had on the bassoon."

Unfortunately, it is only from such stories as these that any real glimpse can be obtained of Gainsborough's home life, even when his name was in every one's mouth and the road outside his studio was crowded with the carriages of those who came to employ him. Just a touch of nature here and there lights up the arid record of his triumphs, and the man himself stands out from his brilliant surroundings as an affectionate and generous brother, an indulgent husband and father. John, his eldest brother, acknowledges help from him to carry on some futile experiment ; there is a passing allusion to



MRS BUCHANAN M'MILLAN



RETURN TO LONDON

a happy day spent at Henley with Humphrey, who was "as well as could be expected, considering his affliction for the loss of his poor wife," whom he was to follow to the grave so soon; his sister, Mrs Gibbon, still living at Bath, is thanked for a present of fish, "which turned out as good as ever was eaten," and was shared by Humphrey, who was stopping with his brother at the time, and may possibly then have sat for the beautiful portrait in which his sad and thoughtful face looks up with the light full upon it. Gainsborough adds that his wife "has been very indifferent with the disorder (probably influenza) that goes about all parts of London; it seems to be a sort of cold, attended by a bad cough, and it has gone through our family, servants and all; but, thank God, we are upon the mending hand: we don't hear of many people dying of it, though it is universal." His letter winds up with a hint that things are not very prosperous with the Gibbons, and that they supplement their clerical income by taking lodgers: "I am glad," he says, "to hear business in the lodging-house way goes on so well. I knew you would willingly keep the cart upon the wheels till you go to Heaven, though you deserve to ride in something better. I told Humphrey you were a rank Methodist, who says you had better be a Presbyterian; but I say Church of England. It does not signify what, if you are but free from hypocrisy, and don't set your heart upon worldly honours and wealth."

A year later, when Humphrey had met his tragic fate, Gainsborough took on his own shoulders all the burden of settling his affairs, as will be seen by the following letter to the same sister:—

"DEAR SISTER,—I have been going to write to you every post for this month past, but was desirous of acquainting you with what I had done towards settling my brother Humphrey's affairs, and, therefore, postponed writing till I had sold the stock. Mr Cooper advises me to keep on the house till we can make the most of the steam-engine (as the work, if taken to pieces, perhaps may never be put together again), and also the maid in the house, lest any discovery should be made of it. The goods are sold, but none of the books; nor have I had any account yet from Henley, so as to be able to settle anything. We hope you and Sally continue in good health and good bustling spirits, and join in best affections to you both. T. G."

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Yet another letter to Mrs Gibbon a year later betrays the portrait painter's yearning for the meadows and streams, the woods and fields of his beloved Suffolk. He is glad, he says, of any excuse to get out into the country, and now his wife and daughters are bent on a visit to their old friends, the Kilderbees, at Ipswich. He would like to go with them; but Sir Benjamin Trueman's grand-daughter is coming from Wiltshire to sit to him, and he must be content to fetch his family home again. To this succeeds a playful account of how he "packed them off in their own coach, with David on horse-back, and Molly wrote to let him know that they arrived very safe; but somehow or other, they seem desirous of returning rather sooner than the proposed time. . . . The bargain was that I should fetch them home. I don't know what the matter is—either people don't pay them honour enough for ladies that keep a coach, or else madam is afraid to trust me alone in this great town."

Another naïve hint of Gainsborough's loving nature is given in the story told of how, when he was on a brief visit to Bath for rest and recreation, a certain Mrs Heathcote brought to him a little boy of five years old, the sole survivor of a large family of children who had succumbed to a destructive illness which had been raging in various parts of the kingdom, probably the same as that referred to in the letter to Mrs Gibbon quoted above. The painter at first said no to the mother's urgent entreaties; but relented when she brought the poor little fellow to him in his simple everyday clothes. "If," he is reported to have said, "you had paraded him in a fancy costume, I would not have painted him; now I will gladly comply with your request."

It was again to Mrs Gibbon that Gainsborough turned when in 1780 his daughter Mary wounded him to the heart by announcing her engagement to Fischer. He and her mother were both equally opposed to the match; but yielded a reluctant consent rather than risk the scandal of the elopement which would certainly otherwise have taken place. The letter is a pathetic revelation that even Gainsborough's wonderful career was not exempt from mortification; for it breathes throughout a spirit of melancholy resignation which is very touching.

"Dear Sister," he says, "I imagine you are by this time no stranger to the alteration which has taken place in my



THE HON. WELBORE ELLIS



RETURN TO LONDON

family. The notice I had of it was very sudden, as I had not the least suspicion of the attachment being so long and deeply settled ; and, as it was too late for me to alter anything, without being the cause of total unhappiness on both sides, my *consent*, which was a mere compliment to affect to ask, I needs must give : whether such a match was agreeable to me or not, I would not have the cause of unhappiness lay upon my conscience ; and accordingly they were married last Monday, and are settled for the present in a ready-furnished little house in Curzon Street, May Fair. I can't say I have any reason to doubt the man's honesty or goodness of heart, as I never heard any one speak anything amiss of him ; and as to his oddities and temper, she must learn to like as she likes his person, for nothing can be altered now. I pray God she may be happy with him, and have her health. Peggy has been very unhappy about it ; but I endeavour to comfort her, in hope that she will have more pride and goodness than to do anything without first asking my advice and approbation. We shall see how they go on, and I shall write to you further upon the subject. I hope you are all well, and with best wishes, I remain your affectionate bro. . . . "THOS. GAINSBOROUGH."

The melancholy prognostications of the parents were unfortunately more than realised. The union was not a happy one, and after a few years of ever-widening alienation Mary Fischer and her husband were separated by mutual consent. Rumour, ever busy with the names of those who are unfortunate in the marriage lottery, gave as the reason certain vagaries indulged in by the young wife, such as a penchant for the Prince of Wales, who she is said to have believed to be in love with her ; but there seems to have been absolutely no foundation for the report beyond the fact that she gave the fine likeness of Fischer by her father to the Prince—a strange gift indeed to a lover, if lover the recipient had been ! Some few mischief-makers even asserted that Mary's mind was a little unhinged, and that she inherited the taint of insanity from her mother ; but for this aspersion on Mrs Gainsborough there can never have been the slightest foundation, for she was undoubtedly a woman of strong common-sense and perfectly well-balanced mind. Mary Fischer lived to be quite an old woman, surviving her husband, who died in 1800, for twenty-six years.

Chapter IX.

GAINSBOROUGH'S ARISTOCRATIC PATRONS IN LONDON.

LORD BATEMAN AND SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT—GAINSBOROUGH'S SUMMONS TO BUCKINGHAM PALACE—HIS FIRST PORTRAITS OF THE KING, QUEEN, AND PRINCESSES — GAINSBOROUGH'S FINAL QUARREL WITH THE ACADEMY—FIRST PORTRAIT OF THE PRINCE OF WALES—PORTRAIT GROUP OF THE PRINCE, MRS FITZHERBERT, SHERIDAN, AND LORD RADNOR—PORTRAITS OF THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND—THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER AND HER DAUGHTERS : THE LADIES WALDEGRAVE — VARIOUS PORTRAITS OF GREAT NOBLES — LATER PORTRAITS OF THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE—PORTRAITS OF SIR GEORGE SACKVILLE, LORD GAGE, AND LADY MAYNARD.

GAINSBOROUGH'S first aristocratic friends in London seem to have been Lord Bateman and Sir George Beaumont. To the former Thicknesse, in his biography of the painter, proudly claims to have introduced him in the following characteristic terms:—"Of all the men I ever knew," he says, "he (Gainsborough) possessed least of that worldly knowledge to enable him to make his own way into the notice of the great world. I therefore wrote to Lord Bateman, who knew him and admired his talents, . . . urging him, . . . for both our sakes, to give him countenance and make him known, that being all which was necessary." "His lordship," adds this egotistical and tautological biographer, "for one or both our sakes did so, and Gainsborough's removal from Bath to London proved as good a move as it was from Ipswich to Bath."

So far as it has been possible to ascertain, the so-called introduction was worse than useless; for Gainsborough, as related in the last chapter, had already been the guest of Lord Bateman at his country seat; but even if the two had never met before, the son of the "mushroom noble," whom, it was said, George I. had raised to the Irish peerage to avoid making



THE ROYAL PRINCESSES
DAUGHTERS OF GEORGE III.



ARISTOCRATIC PATRONS IN LONDON

him a Knight of the Bath, because, to quote the monarch's own words, "I can make him a lord, but I cannot make him a gentleman!" was the last person whose "countenance" could be of any use in the London world of fashion. Though George I., whom Lady Wortley Montagu, with her usual terseness of style, dubbed "an honest blockhead," was scarcely a judge of what a gentleman should be, the second Lord Bateman was certainly not noteworthy for refinement of manners; and he excited the scorn of his contemporaries by his sale by auction of the property at Windsor left to him by his brother. "I was hurt," says Horace Walpole, writing to the Rev. W. Cole in 1774, the very year of the "introduction" to Gainsborough, "to see half the ornaments for the chapel and the reliquaries: in short, a hundred trifles exposed to sneers. I am buying a few to keep for the founder's sake. Surely it is very indecent for a favourite relation who is rich to show so little remembrance and affection. . . ." "This is a golden age literally," says the same writer in another letter *à propos* of this sale; "and we should not wonder if the people sold their children as the negroes do."

Very different to that of Lord Bateman was the character of Sir George Beaumont, with whom Gainsborough had also probably been acquainted before he came to London. The Baronet belonged to an English family of long descent, who, though he lived in the good old hospitable style, yet kept clear of the vices of his day, such as drunkenness and gambling. At his table met the chief artists, actors, and authors of the time; and Gainsborough, shy as he was of general society, was a frequent guest. Sir George has the distinction of having been the very first of the great army of amateur painters of England who now overrun the land, and it was to him that Sir Joshua Reynolds gave the characteristic advice: "Mix a little wax with your colours, but don't tell anybody"—an incidental illustration of the President's unfortunate fondness for trying experiments himself, which explains the cracking of so many of his finest works. Sir George replied: "But wax will make the painting crack," to which Sir Joshua replied, "All good pictures crack." Angelo, in his charming "Reminiscences," touches off the character and appearance of the courtly Baronet in his usual happy manner: he was "an adept at designing . . . the

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

first of modern amateur painters and very friendly patron of certain professors of art"; but above all he was the very best swimmer of his day. "He was inclined to be fat; . . . and having been persuaded that the frequency of bathing would reduce his size, he for one period might be said to be amphibious. . . . He could dive and remain under water for a long time with his eyes open." Sir George Beaumont, who dabbled in literature as well as in painting, gives in one of his letters an anecdote of Gainsborough which brings out well a side of the artist's nature not often referred to—his love of mirth, and tendency to see the comic side of a situation at inconvenient seasons. The two had been talking over a certain French abbé, who was afflicted with a morbid fear of laughing at the most serious moments, and could never raise the host without going through a perfect anguish of dread. Gainsborough, on hearing this anecdote, confessed that he too felt the same kind of thing when painting very grave and solemn sitters, and was often obliged to apologise to them for unseemly mirth. He added that he had been once the guest of the Earl of R——, at whose house it was the custom to have daily prayers. He was unwilling to attend, lest he should not be able to help laughing at the chaplain, whose "puritanical physiognomy wrought whimsically upon his imagination. . . . Receiving a hint from his host that service was performed at nine, and that the whole household was expected to appear, Gainsborough added that the thought of Horace Walpole's old lady of fashion taking coffee and prayers at eleven mixed itself so untimely with his Lordship's condescension, that he would not have attended even if the chapel altar had been newly painted by Correggio. . . ." A few days after the first invitation to prayers, which Gainsborough had disregarded, his Lordship reminded him again, saying, "Perhaps, Mr Gainsborough, you geniuses having wandering memories, you may have forgotten." "No, my Lord," replied the painter, "I have not!" Sir George goes on to relate that, annoyed at Lord R——'s persistency Gainsborough determined to stop with him no longer; and, "as soon as the Earl and his household had assembled at their devotions, the chapel bell having ceased, he rang the bell of the apartment in which he was painting, and desired the servant who attended (evidently another objector to daily prayers) to inform his Lordship that



GEORGE III.

*From a Photograph by
Braun Clément & Cie.
Dornach (Alsace), Paris, & New York*



ARISTOCRATIC PATRONS IN LONDON

he had gone to breakfast at Salisbury. A few days afterwards he sent a letter from Bath to inform his late host that he had returned home; for he knew he had stayed too long at his noble seat, and taking his Lordship's second hint to be off, he had accordingly departed." Truly, it was no wonder that Gainsborough made enemies as well as friends, when he could thus resent so very gentle a reminder of the initial law of good manners, requiring a visitor to respect the customs of the house in which he is receiving hospitality.

Gainsborough does not appear to have painted portraits in London either of Lord Bateman or of Sir George Beaumont. The former, in spite of all that Thicknesse says about his "condescension," took very little notice of the artist; and the latter, in spite of his affection for him, preferred the work of Reynolds, advising every one to go to him, saying, "Even if his pictures do fade, a faded picture from him will be the finest thing you can have." The recommendation of Sir George, or indeed of any one else, was, however, quite unneeded by Gainsborough; for so great was the rage for portraiture on his arrival in London, that it very soon became almost impossible to keep pace with the demands on his time, even though he had to compete with such men as Reynolds, Ramsay, and Romney, not to speak of the fascinating little personage Angelica Kauffmann, to whom it was the fashion to sit for her sake rather than for that of her work.

King George III. had already noticed the great Suffolk artist's work in the Academy, and had been specially struck with the portrait of Garrick exhibited in 1772. Gainsborough had not been long in Schomberg House before he was sent for to Buckingham Palace, and commissioned to paint portraits of the King, the Queen, and the three elder of the numerous Princesses. He soon became a personal favourite with his royal sitters, rivalling even West and Ramsay in their good graces; and though the court etiquette was then even more rigid than in the days of Fanny Burney's martyrdom as a lady-in-waiting, he was admitted to the Palace at all hours of the day. Had his pen been as ready as his brush, what vivid word-pictures he might have given of those happy early days before the shadow of King George's insanity darkened the home-life of the royal pair, and there was still some hope of the Prince of Wales, then a high-spirited lad of

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

twelve years old, conquering that ungovernable temper which was the despair of his tutors, and when the laxity of morals which was the bane of his future life had not yet declared itself. George III. was only thirty-six years old when Gainsborough painted his first portrait of him ; and Queen Charlotte, five years his junior, was in the very prime of a woman's life, proud of her husband and of her position as his wife, delighting in her well-filled nursery, and oblivious of her early jealousy of the fair Quakeress Hannah Lightfoot and of Lady Sarah Lenox, both of whom George III. had preferred before her. Her only griefs were the various illnesses of her children and the death of one of the young Princes, whose likeness Gainsborough painted after his death, being admitted to make a sketch of the little face before the funeral.

The first portrait of George III. by Gainsborough represents His Majesty in the robes of the Garter, holding a plumed hat in his hand, and is now in Windsor Castle : it was engraved in mezzotint by Gainsborough Dupont, who had joined his uncle in London ; a second portrait, with one of Queen Charlotte, is at the Horse Guards, London ; yet others of the royal pair are at Buckingham Palace : whilst the Duchess of Gloucester owns a very fine likeness of Queen Charlotte, supposed to be the original from which several others were painted. Gainsborough, said a critic of one of the later portraits of the Queen, "made even our old Queen Charlotte look picturesque." In Windsor Castle is also a portrait-group* of the heads of George III., Queen Charlotte, and of all their children then living (except Prince Frederick, afterwards Duke of York), which was exhibited at the Academy in 1783 ; whilst various private personages have other likenesses of the royal children, evidently painted not long after Gainsborough settled in London. The portrait-group which attracted most attention during the life of the artist was that representing at full length the Princess Royal, Princess Augusta, and Princess Elizabeth, painted probably in 1782 or 1783. It was about the hanging of this picture that Gainsborough finally quarrelled with the Royal Academy in 1784, after a hollow truce had been patched up and he had again begun exhibiting in their rooms. The story of this quarrel is

* Of this group Horace Walpole said : "The King, most unfavourable likeness ; Prince of Wales very like and the best of the set ; the Princess Elizabeth the next best ; most of the rest weak and inanimate."



*From a Photograph by
Braun Clément & Cie.
Dornach (Alsace), Paris, & New York*

QUEEN CHARLOTTE



ARISTOCRATIC PATRONS IN LONDON

differently told by the defenders of Gainsborough on the one hand, and of the Royal Academicians on the other. The portrait-group, it appears, was painted to occupy a certain position in a room at Carlton House (the residence of the Prince of Wales), and the artist naturally wished that it should be hung as nearly as possible under similar conditions of height and light. To have done this, the Academicians would have had to break through one of their rules ; and, taking no notice of Gainsborough's letter on the subject, they hung the picture on what was called the full-length line. Gainsborough, who so rarely took up his pen, even in his own defence, was so annoyed by this destruction of the effect he aimed at that he wrote to the committee, saying he "begs pardon for giving them so much trouble, but he has painted the picture of the Princesses in so tender a light that, notwithstanding he approves very much of the established line for strong effects, he cannot possibly consent to have it placed higher than eight and a half feet, because the likenesses and work of the picture will not be seen any higher ; therefore, at a word, he will not trouble the gentlemen against their inclination, but will beg the rest of his pictures back again."

It seems difficult to believe that, when they had at last got such a giant among painters to return to them after years of absence, the Council of the Academy could have been so blind to their own interests as to take the angry artist at his word ; but they did so. The pictures were all returned to Schomberg House, and Gainsborough never troubled them again with any of his work.

Gainsborough, unlike Reynolds, who is generally credited with a worldly wisdom and tact so much superior to those of his rival from Suffolk, was able in later years to keep friends with George III., even whilst painting the portraits of his rebellious son the Prince of Wales, and his detested brother the Duke of Cumberland. The first portrait of the Prince when a child, with his sister the Princess Royal, was probably painted at Buckingham Palace for the Queen ; but when their eldest son had joined the Opposition, voting against his father on every possible occasion, and living amongst the least reputable of the young Whigs, it must have been galling to the parents for Gainsborough to be immortalising that son as the lover of Mrs Robinson, who got her pathetic name of Perdita from her connection with the heir-apparent, and of

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Mrs Fitzherbert, whom he is said to have actually married. The Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV., was but eighteen when he disgraced himself by his intrigue with Mrs Robinson, an actress, with whom he fell in love on the night of her *début* as Juliet in 1779, and who left the stage to live with him, only to be set aside a few years later for a successor in the person of Mrs Fitzherbert. Perdita, who sat for her portrait to Sir Joshua Reynolds as well as to Gainsborough whilst she was under the protection of the Prince, also figured later in several of the President's fancy pictures. Before he left her, the Prince of Wales had given her a bond for no less a sum than £60,000, but she returned it to him in exchange for an annuity of £400. His compromising letters, which she threatened to make public, she sold to him for £5000. "Poor Perdita," says the biographer of Reynolds, "had loved her Florizel with real fondness, if we may take her word for it"; and he tells how a certain lad of fifteen named Smith, who was a pupil of the then popular portrait painter Sherwin, fell in love with her at first sight when "she came singing into the room with her mother, and asked to see a drawing of herself which Sherwin had made." Sherwin, adds Leslie, was not at home, and the 'prentice was despatched for the drawing with promise of a reward. He went upstairs humming the refrain of a song he had heard Perdita sing as Rosetta the night before: "And I'll reward you with a kiss." When the drawing was given to her the merry girl did kiss him, saying, "There, you little rogue." She used, it is said, to drive about London in a carriage on the light blue panels of which a basket of flowers was painted in the form of a coronet.

A portrait-group painted by Gainsborough is painfully significant of the readiness with which the Prince of Wales' lax morality was condoned, in which His Royal Highness is represented in a boat with Mrs Fitzherbert, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Lord Radnor, the last named the noted boon companion of the heir-apparent whom Walpole, writing to Mann in 1773, characterises as a "simple old Phœbus." Prince George of Wales, who was by this time alienated from his father beyond hope of reconciliation, first met Mrs Fitzherbert, already twice a widow, in 1784, when she was twenty-eight, and he was twenty-three. She belonged to a respectable Catholic family of



*From a Photograph by
J. Caswall Smith*

MRS FITZHERBERT





*From a Photograph by
Braun Clément & Cie.
Dornach (Alsace), Paris, & New York*

GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES



ARISTOCRATIC PATRONS IN LONDON

the name of Smythe, and is said to have been not only very lovely, but highly intellectual and cultivated. Though she seems to have been genuinely attached to the Prince, she resisted all his solicitations, declining to receive him or to enter his house until after the secret marriage performed by an Anglican clergyman in 1785. The story goes that, before he had known her long, the Prince stabbed himself in his despair at her coldness, and as he lay bleeding on his bed, he cried aloud for her, saying that she alone could save his life. "In the utmost consternation," says Lord Stourton, a friend and relation of the widow, "Keith the surgeon, Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton, and Mr Edward Bouverie" hastened to fetch Mrs Fitzherbert, "telling her that the life of the Prince was in imminent danger, . . . and that only her immediate presence could save him. She resisted in the most peremptory manner at first; but, becoming herself alarmed, she at last consented to go and see the sufferer, on condition that some lady of high character should accompany her. The Duchess of Devonshire," adds the relater of the strange episode, "was selected. They four drove from Park Street to Devonshire House and took her along with them. . . ." Arrived at Carlton House, "she found the Prince pale and covered with blood. . . ." He told her "that nothing would induce him to live, unless she promised to become his wife and permit him to put a ring round her finger then and there." The Duchess of Devonshire, on whose reputation no shadow of reproach had ever rested, noted beauty though she was, "lent a ring of hers for the purpose." The Prince seemed cheered and relieved. His newly-made bride, for so he now considered Mrs Fitzherbert, returned with her escort to Devonshire House, and a deposition was drawn up of what had occurred, and signed and sealed by each one of the party. The next day, however, Mrs Fitzherbert left England for Holland, writing to Lord Southampton, to protest that she did not consider the ceremony binding, for she had not been a free agent.

The rage of the Prince at her disappearance is described as having been beyond all bounds. Fox's wife, who was then, by the way, only his mistress, so thin at that time was the line drawn between legal and illegal unions, told Lord Holland that "he cried by the hour, . . . rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hysterics, and swearing he would abandon the country and

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

forego the crown" rather than lose the object of his passion. He wrote to the fugitive lady letters extending to some twenty or thirty pages; and at last he gained his cause, for she returned to England and was married to him in the presence of witnesses, although she must have known full well that she could not be legally his wife. Even if the Royal Marriage Act of 1772 had not been passed, she was a Roman Catholic, and that alone would have been sufficient to invalidate the union. In vain the Prince's best friends, including Fox and Sheridan, entreated him not to take so suicidal a step. He was not to be persuaded to give up his own way, but to the baseness which accepted such a sacrifice as Mrs Fitzherbert had made for him, he added that of denial, writing to Fox: "Make yourself easy, my dear friend. Believe me, the world will now soon be convinced that there not only is, but never was, any grounds for those reports which of late have been so malevolently circulated."

The Prince of Wales seems to have been the only one of King George's numerous children whose portrait Gainsborough painted after they left the royal nursery. This may have been because his friendship with the undutiful son was disapproved of at the Palace, though there is no hint in any biography of coldness towards him on the part either of King George or Queen Charlotte. The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, however, whom Gainsborough had known at Bath (see pp. 76, 77) sat to him several times; as did also the Duchess of Gloucester, the lovely Lady Maria Waldegrave, who, as the widow of the Earl of Waldegrave, had married the King's brother, William Henry, Duke of Gloucester, in 1770, though the fact was not notified to George III. till 1772, just after the passing of the Act, which, had it been retrospective, would have rendered their union illegal. In this case, unlike that of the Prince of Wales and Mrs Fitzherbert, or of the Duke of Cumberland and Mrs Horton, the royal lover was faithful to the end, giving up everything for the sake of his bride. The Duchess of Gloucester was one of Sir Joshua Reynolds' favourite sitters, and Leslie tells how he found in a side pocket of the 1759 journal "a delicate golden-brown tress of hair inscribed 'Lady Waldegrave.'" Reynolds painted her as a girl years before her first marriage, as a bride, as a



*From the Mezzotint
by V Green*

THE DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND





*From a Photograph by
Braun Clément & Cie.
Dornach (Alsace), Paris, & New York*

PRINCESS MARIE
DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

ARISTOCRATIC PATRONS IN LONDON

young mother with her first child, and again and again in later life ; so that her features are nearly as well known to this generation as they were to her own. Fanny Burney tells how the beautiful Duchess of Gloucester was worshipped by every one, even by Omiah from Otaheite, who, when the fair lady, having no other suitable present for him, gave him her pocket-handkerchief embroidered with her coronet, kissed the coronet and "made a most complaisant bow to the Duchess ; this mark of his attention, politeness, and quickness, gaining him the good graces of all present."

The Duchess of Gloucester's children seem to have inherited her beauty. Her three daughters, the Ladies Laura, Maria, and Horatia, sat several times to Reynolds, and once to Gainsborough. Of them Walpole said : "These three charming girls inherit more of their mother's beauty than her fortune ; each has missed one of the best matches in this country, . . . after each had proposed and been accepted." They married eventually, Lady Laura : Lord Caermarthen, Lady Maria : Lord Cheriton, and Lady Horatia : Lord Hugh Seymour."

Amongst the many titled personages who sat to Gainsborough between 1774 and 1788 were Charles Howard and Bernard Edward, Dukes of Norfolk—one in a Spanish costume, the other in a fancy dress ; Charles, Duke of Rutland, in a Vandyck dress ; Henry Scott, Duke of Buccleuch, whom Sir Joshua Reynolds painted so often ; William Petty, Marquis of Lansdowne, who was a true connoisseur of art, and bequeathed to his heirs a fine gallery of pictures now dispersed, every one of which he chose and bought himself without the aid of a middleman ; Richard Grosvenor, the first Marquis of Westminster, who, as a boy "with twenty or thirty thousand a year," began the formation of the noble collection of pictures which is still one of the best and most representative in England, and was the first to recognise the beauty and historical value of West's *Death of Wolfe*, which he bought at the 1772 Exhibition of the Royal Academy ; Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby, who won much renown as an actor in the private theatricals got up by the Duke of Richmond in Priory Gardens, and was quaintly criticised in his character of Lovemore in the "Town and Country Magazine" for 1787 as "failing in figure, face, and voice, but excellent in manner";

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Henry Herbert, Earl of Carnarvon, in his peer's robes ; John, Earl of Buckinghamshire, dressed in the ornate costume of the period : sky-blue coat and breeches, white satin gold-embroidered vest, and scarlet robes ; less celebrated than his beautiful wife, also painted by Gainsborough, in a white satin dress with broad yellow sash, who several times sat to Sir Joshua Reynolds, and learnt painting from him, a palette set for her by her great teacher being still preserved at the Royal Academy ; the Countess of Egremont, whose husband was a liberal art-patron, "who cared not what he gave" for a picture he fancied ; the Earl of Mulgrave, Fanny Burney's friend and admirer, who so often joked her about her satire on the navy in the person of her "Captain Mirvan," and whose house in London was one of those destroyed by the mob in 1779 after the trial by court-martial of Admiral Keppel ; the Duke of Northumberland, the great buyer of second-rate foreign pictures ; and the Duchess of Devonshire, whose story is told in chapter vi. in connection with the account of Gainsborough's first portrait of her as a child, and of whose later portrait by the great Suffolk artist, exhibited at the Academy in 1778, the story is told that he "drew a wet pencil across a mouth which all who saw it thought exquisitely lovely," saying : "Her Grace is too hard for me," and of which Allan Cunningham says : "The dazzling beauty of the Duchess, and the sense she entertained of the charms of her looks and her conversation, took away that readiness of hand, that hasty happiness of touch, which belonged to Gainsborough in his ordinary moments. The portrait was so little to his satisfaction that he refused to send it to Chatsworth."* Other titled notables whose portraits Gainsborough painted were the Marquis of Bristol, who, as Captain Hervey, had sat to him at Bath ; Lord Sandwich, that reckless gambler but able naval officer, who was one of the most determined sticklers for the undefined privileges of Members of Parliament ; Lord Gage, "one of those persons to whom the privileges of Parliament were of extreme importance, as their own liberties were inseparable from them," whose portrait was so greatly admired in the

* Horace Walpole characterised this portrait, which is now lost, as bad and washy ; but then his great friend, Lady Diana Beauclerk, formerly Lady Bolingbroke, also exhibited a portrait of the Duchess in 1778, and Walpole was determined that it should be *the* picture of the year. A second portrait of the Duchess, also lost, having, it is said, been cut out of its frame by a thief still undiscovered, was bought by Messrs Agnew at the Wynn Ellis sale for £10,605.



GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE
The Lost Picture



ARISTOCRATIC PATRONS IN LONDON

1772 Exhibition ; and his wife, Lady Gage, painted apparently considerably later ; Lord George Sackville, the unfortunate commander who, for his neglect to complete the victory of Minden by a charge of the horse which he headed, was tried by court-martial on his return home ; Sir Harbord Harbord, painted for his constituents in Norwich, and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1783 as the portrait of a gentleman ; and Lady Maynard, the wife of the second Viscount Maynard, once all too well-known as Nancy Parsons.

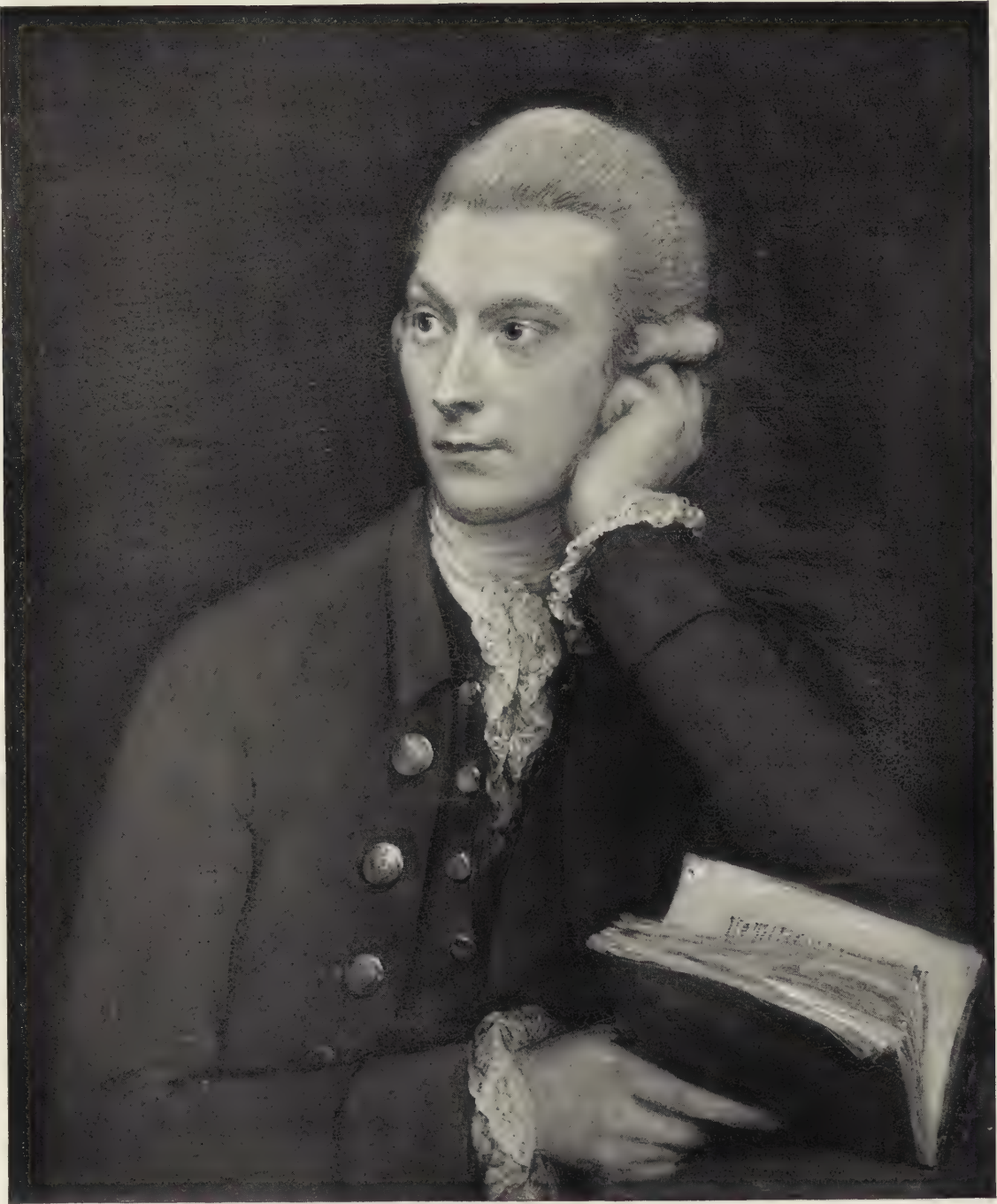
Chapter X.

PORTRAITS OF GREAT STATESMEN.

VARIOUS LIKENESSES OF THE SECOND PITT—PORTRAITS OF EDMUND BURKE AND OF CHARLES JAMES FOX—LATER PORTRAITS OF RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN—PORTRAITS OF ROBERT LORD CLIVE, LORD NORTH, DR BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, WILLIAM WYNDHAM, AND OF GEORGE CANNING AS A YOUNG MAN.

VALUABLE as are the likenesses of the royalties and other notables of the eighteenth century, who owed their distinction rather to their birth or wealth than to their characters, they are excelled in interest by the various portraits of the great politicians and lawyers, the divines, the authors and the actors, whose work left its mark not only on their own age, but on that which succeeded it. To William Pitt and Edmund Burke, those men of high moral principles and pure lives in a corrupt age; to Charles James Fox and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, in spite of all their faults; to the "Heaven-born general," Robert Clive, as Pitt called the founder of the Indian Empire; to the intensely patriotic George Canning; and to the less well-known William Wyndham, the disinterested supporter of Burke and Pitt, England still owes a deep debt of gratitude: and in the portraits of them left behind him by Gainsborough, their faces seem to be still lit up with the fire of eloquence which so won upon their contemporaries.

Best of these priceless heirlooms are the numerous likenesses of Pitt, all taken when that youngest of all Prime Ministers was at the beginning of his remarkable career, and his features were still stamped with the expression, so rarely retained after early boyhood, of purity and unworldliness which characterised him until near the end of his long and useful life, when, alas, he too lost something of his natural nobility of character by yielding to the then almost universal



JOHN PALMER, M.P.



PORTRAITS OF GREAT STATESMEN

vice of intemperance. Except for the short interval of a few months, Pitt remained Prime Minister till his death: that is to say, for twenty eventful years, never losing his mastery over the nation, or, stranger still, over himself, and laying the foundations of true political freedom, for there can be no doubt that it was he who finally broke through the fatal system of the Ministry being under the control of one king's favourite after another.

Edmund Burke, the great thinker and orator, who did so much to reform the political abuses of his time, and whose writings still exercise an important influence at the present day, was in the prime of life and at the zenith of his power and popularity when he sat to Gainsborough for the one portrait of him left by that great artist. His best speeches, such as that on American taxation, and on conciliation with America, were uttered in Parliament in the earlier portion of Gainsborough's residence in London; though his "Reflections on the French Revolution," considered his finest piece of writing, was not published till 1790, two years after the artist's death.

Married at the age of eighteen to his first love, the daughter of Dr Nugent of Bath, the great statesman kept clear of the intrigues so fashionable in his day; the vices of gambling and drink had no attraction for him, and, though contemporary letters are full of anecdotes of his private life, not one reflects on his morality, not one shows him in any light but that of an upright and downright English gentleman, worthy of the strong affection felt for him by all classes. Now he is offering to sit to the irascible artist Barry, urged to do so by some commiserator of the Irishman's poverty; now he is reading Goldsmith's "Good-natured Man" to a carefully-chosen group of friends at his own house, or aiding to silence the objections of Colman, the manager to "She Stoops to Conquer"; now he is befriending Crabbe the poet, and welcoming him to Beaconsfield, he writes to wish Offy Palmer, Sir Joshua Reynolds' niece, all happiness on her marriage, he laughingly tells some friend how he was attacked by highwaymen on Hounslow Heath and eased of five guineas, or relates his narrow escape on Black Wednesday from the Gordon mob, who were specially bitter against him as the active supporter of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill. Again he is proposing, at an

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Academy dinner, the health of Alderman Boydell, donor of the Shakespear Gallery in Pall Mall, in the decoration of which he employed Reynolds, West, and other great artists, or he is addressing his old friend Reynolds as he leaves for the last time the chair he has occupied as President for so long, in the words of Milton—

“The angel ended, and in Adam’s ear
So charming left his voice that he awhile
Thought him still speaking, still stood fix’d to hear.”

Very different to that of Pitt or of Burke was the character of Charles James Fox, the erratic statesman who sat so often both to Gainsborough and to Sir Joshua Reynolds. The third son of the first Lord Holland, Charles James Fox was born in 1749, and was educated at Eton and Oxford. Though he early gave proof of very distinguished abilities, he was, alas! equally precocious in such vices as gambling and drinking, and he was chief amongst those who exercised so pernicious an influence over the young Prince of Wales. He entered Parliament before he was twenty, and was made a Lord of the Admiralty under Lord North in 1770. Throughout the American War he was one of the bitterest opponents of coercion, and in his long Parliamentary career his voice was always heard on the side of freedom, and not unfrequently of licence. His rivalry with Pitt, with his fierce opposition to Burke, called forth some of the most eloquent speeches of those two great orators; and whether in power or in Opposition, Fox always held an important place in the estimation of the public. Now courted and flattered by aristocrats and democrats alike, now hated and escaping with difficulty from mob violence, the adventures of the “Cub,” as he was familiarly called, reflect in a marked degree the fluctuations of political life in the reign of George III., that king of many ministers. Recalled to office after a long absence from power on the death of Pitt, Fox followed that greater statesman to the grave in 1806, just as he was about to bring in a Bill for the abolition of slavery and was inaugurating the negotiations for the peace with France which he had always vigorously advocated.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who was one of Gainsborough’s chosen friends, was several times painted by him in London. The main facts of the life of this versatile author, actor, and political orator have already been given in connection

PORTRAITS OF GREAT STATESMEN

with the account of the earliest likenesses of him and of his lovely wife taken at Bath. When the London portraits were painted, Sheridan must have been just beginning his Parliamentary career, for it was in connection with the impeachment of Warren Hastings in 1788, the year of Gainsborough's death, that he made the two great speeches which won him recognition as an orator of the highest rank. The first of these historical outpourings was delivered in the House of Commons after the impeachment; the second in Westminster Hall at the actual trial, when Gainsborough must have heard his friend's voice for almost the last time. For thirty-two years Sheridan remained in the House of Commons, always winning a hearing when he spoke, and never failing to support Fox, to whom he was devotedly attached. He was constantly with George IV. when he was still Prince of Wales, was one of his most faithful adherents when he became Regent, and, though his own life was not altogether blameless, he seems to have exercised a salutary influence over the Hanoverian prince. After the death of his first wife, Sheridan married a Miss Ogle, the daughter of the Dean of Winchester, who long survived him.

According to his biographers, Gainsborough more than once painted Robert, Lord Clive. If this be so, the portraits of the great ruler of Bengal must date from the summer of 1774, as Clive died by his own hand in November of that year; and, as far as can be ascertained, he was not at Bath at the same time as the Gainsboroughs.

It would be interesting to compare the portraits of the great statesmen Pitt, Burke, Fox, Sheridan, and Clive, who, whatever mistakes they may have made in their public careers, yet worked successfully for the good of the country to which they belonged, with those of the two men, Lord North and Dr Benjamin Franklin, who did most—the former, as it were, by accident; the latter intentionally—to separate America from England. The portrait of Lord North, in which that statesman's high-bred features with the mobile lips, the dark, intelligent eyes, and broad but receding forehead betray the weakness which made him so ready to yield his own judgment to that of George III., was most probably painted between 1778 and 1782, before his retirement from office put a final end to the personal government of the king.

Dr Benjamin Franklin, the versatile genius whose reputa-

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

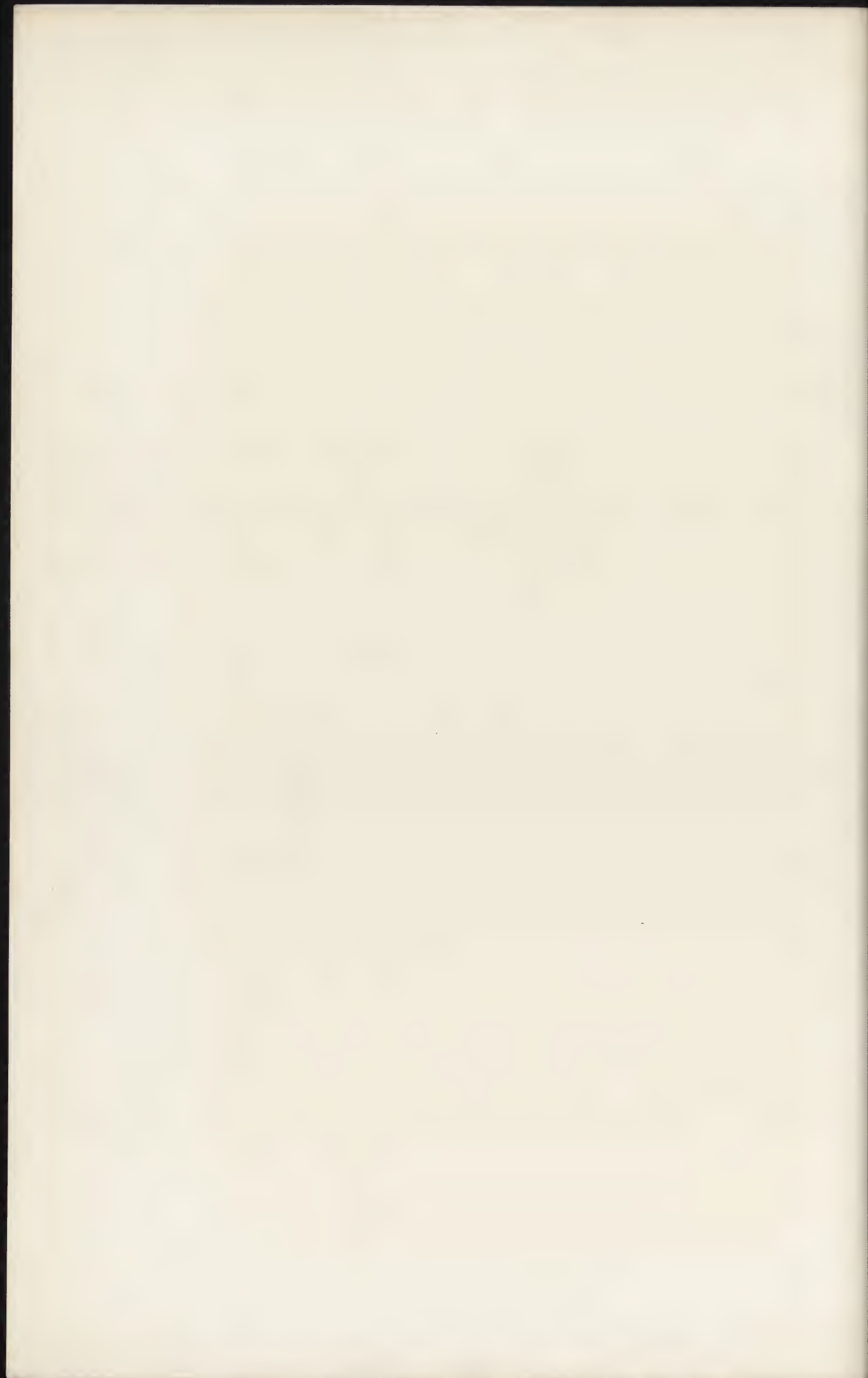
tion as a scientific discoverer was only equalled by his own fame as a politician, was the fifteenth of a family of seventeen children, and was born at Boston, Massachusetts, in 1706. After a chequered but strangely successful career, he was sent to aid in negotiating the Treaty of Paris, which had such far-reaching results; and it is supposed to have been about 1780, during a short visit to London, that Gainsborough painted his portrait. He was then past seventy, but his great faculties were still unimpaired. He remained in Paris until 1783, winning all hearts there, and inaugurating that strong friendship between France and America which is maintained to the present day.

A minor political star of the London of Gainsborough's day, whose likeness was one of his most successful portraits, was William Wyndham, the beloved friend of Dr Johnson, whose last hours were soothed by his unremitting attendance. Wyndham's journals are full of deeply interesting allusions to Johnson, to Sheridan, and other original members of the famous Literary Club to which he himself belonged; and it was to him that some of the last letters of Dr Johnson were addressed, in which the sage alludes to the tenderness with which Wyndham "had been pleased to treat him through his long illness," proving that though the nickname of the "weathercock" may have been justly applicable to the Whig statesman as a politician, it did not apply to him as a friend.

The portrait of George Canning, taken in 1787, when the future statesman had only just left Eton, is of special interest as having been one of the last pictures painted by Gainsborough. It represents his latest, as that of the young Wolfe does his earliest, manner, and could the two be seen together, they would illustrate well the beginning and the final development of the style of portraiture so peculiarly his own. Madame D'Arblay tells how, when she was lady-in-waiting to Queen Charlotte at Windsor, she heard that Fox had come to Eton purposely to engage to himself the young Canning, who even then had shown signs of remarkable ability, "and," she adds "he made dinners for him and for his nephew, Lord Holland, to teach them political lessons." Fortunately, it was not from the erratic Charles Fox that Canning really imbibed his first principles, for Burke was his political godfather, and he entered Parliament as the *protégé* of Pitt, six years after the death of Gainsborough.



LADY CLARGES



Chapter XI.

LATER PORTRAITS OF AUTHORS, ACTORS, AND ARTISTS.

PORTRAITS OF DR JOHNSON, PAUL WHITEHEAD, ARTHUR MURPHY,
AND SIR HENRY BATE DUDLEY, EDITOR OF THE "MORNING
POST"—PORTRAITS OF MRS SIDDONS, MRS YATES, GEORGE
COYTE, AND BESSY BRUNTON—RICHARD LOUTHERBOURG
AND HIS MOVABLE PICTURES—GAINSBOROUGH'S IMITA-
TIONS OF THEM—PORTRAIT OF BENJAMIN WEST—WEST'S
INFLUENCE ON ART IN ENGLAND.

THOUGH, owing to Gainsborough's indifference to literature and Dr Johnson's equal coldness towards art, these two great geniuses can have had little in common, something of a friendship seems to have sprung up between them. It is even possible that the brilliant wit and conversationalist, who, when the Gainsboroughs settled in London, was already in his sixty-sixth year, may have found in the society of the simple-hearted, unconventional family some consolation for the loss of the many dear friends whom death had recently claimed. In any case, one portrait, at least, of Dr Johnson holding the staff which had become almost a badge of office with him, was painted by Gainsborough between 1774 and 1780. Unfortunately, Boswell was not admitted to the sittings, and that eager recorder of the minutiae of his hero's life does not once in his apparently inexhaustible biography of the doctor mention the name of Gainsborough. It is, therefore, only from collateral evidence that the date of this one portrait can be approximately fixed; but it appears certain that it was painted when the "Lives of the Poets," the last great literary work of Johnson, was nearing its completion, and its author was the constant guest of Mrs Thrale at Streatham, the idol of the literary circle which met at her house, the only rival star being Fanny Burney, whose "Evelina" the doctor was never tired of praising. Already, when

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Gainsborough's portrait of Johnson was being painted, therefore, the clouds must have been gathering above that refined and happy home: first one and then another of its most frequent guests being called away. Garrick, that "cheerfullest man of the age," whom Johnson clung to as one of his earliest friends, had died in 1779; Topham Beauclerk, in whom the sage delighted, though he quarrelled with him often, growling at his "ever readiness to talk," followed the versatile actor to the grave in 1781; and, in 1782, the sudden death of Mr Thrale himself, who, though not a man of much intellectual culture, yet gave a hearty welcome to the *literati* whom his fascinating wife gathered around her, broke up the Streatham circle.

Burke, Reynolds, and many another of his old friends were with Dr Johnson at the last, and to each one he had a few touching words to say. Great as was his agony of physical pain and his dread of death, he refused to take opiates, for, to quote his own words, he wished "to render up his soul to God unclouded." His last requests to Sir Joshua Reynolds were typically representative of the simple nature of a man who had perhaps exercised more influence than any other over his contemporaries. He begged the great artist never to use his pencil on Sunday, to read the Bible whenever possible and always on Sunday, and to forgive him a debt of thirty pounds, as he wished to leave his money to a poor family.

It was also in London that Gainsborough painted the portraits of the minor *literati*: Paul Whitehead, that "small poet," as Johnson called him, who was one of the monks of Medmenham, and published various political satires, married an heiress of unsound mind for the sake of her fortune, was imprisoned in the Fleet for debt, and, to quote Johnson again, for many years "hung loose on Society"; Arthur Murphy, the author of several plays of ephemeral reputation, who was one of the most urgent of those who advised Fanny Burney, against her own better judgment, to write a play after the success of her "Evelina"; Thomas Pennant, the traveller and writer on natural history, of whom Johnson is reported to have said: "He's a Whig and a sad dog; but he's the best traveller I ever read"; George Colman, Garrick's first manager in London, author, in conjunction with that great actor, of the "Clandestine Marriage"; and the eccentric clergyman,

LATER PORTRAITS OF AUTHORS, ETC.

Henry Bate, editor of the *Morning Post*, of whom so many anecdotes are told in contemporary records, and who, after a stormy literary career, became in 1761 rector of Bradwell, and there devoted himself so religiously to his duties as a clergyman, a magistrate, and an agriculturist that he won medals from the Society of Arts for his skill in reclaiming shorelands, and became Canon of Ely in 1816. He took the name of Dudley in 1784, and was made a baronet in 1812. Walpole, in a letter to Lady Ossory in 1776, tells a characteristic story of Bate's quarrel with his co-proprietor of the *Morning Post*: "Yesterday," he says, "just after I arrived in London, I heard drums and trumpets in Piccadilly. I looked out of the window, and saw a procession with streamers flying. At first I thought it a press-gang, but, seeing the corps so well dressed, like hussars, in yellow, with blue waiscoats and breeches, and high caps, I concluded it was some new body of our allies (Hessian mercenaries) or a regiment newly raised, and with new regimentals for distinction. I was not totally mistaken, for the colonel is a new ally. In short, this was a procession sent forth by Mr Bate, Lord Lyttelton's chaplain, and owner of the old *Morning Post*, and meant as an appeal to the town against his antagonist, the new one. I did not perceive it, but the musicians had masks. On their caps was written *The Morning Post*, and they distributed hand-bills. I am sure there were at least between thirty and forty, and this mummary must have cost a great deal of money. Are not we quite distracted, reprobate, absurd beyond all people that ever lived?"

Lady Bate Dudley also sat to Gainsborough, probably at Bradwell, at the same time as her husband. The likeness of the baronet had a narrow escape in 1869 in a fire at the house in Pall Mall of the engravers, Henry Graves & Son; but Mr Algernon Graves snatched it from the flames, with other art-treasures, at the risk of his own life. Fulcher, in his life of Gainsborough, speaks of a second portrait of Bate by Gainsborough, but it has not been possible to trace it. Of the one painted in 1785, when the Fighting Parson was in his forty-first year, a contemporary is reported to have said "the man wants hanging and the dog execution."

Far more celebrated than any of the portraits hitherto noticed, except, perhaps, those of Garrick, is the wonderful likeness of Mrs Siddons, now in the National Gallery, purchased

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

in 1862 from the great actress's son-in-law, Henry Mair. It was painted in 1784, the year, by the way, of the artist's quarrel with the Academy, when the Queen of the tragic drama was in her twenty-ninth year, in the very prime of her beauty, and at the zenith of her fame. It is a specially notable instance of the skill with which Gainsborough seized and reproduced the keynote of the character of his sitters, subordinating to their personality all minor accessories. The story goes that the painter had a good deal of trouble with this portrait of the great actress, and muttered under his breath, "Damn your nose, madam, there is no end to it!" *A propos* of this anecdote, Armstrong says: "Mrs Siddons, with all her beauty, was a kind of female Johnson, . . . her nose was not so long for nothing." In spite of the difficulties with which the painter had to contend, however, the portrait well brings out the delicacy and truth of intuition which enabled Mrs Siddons to enthrall the attention of her hearers, combined with the severe purity of manner and the stiffness of reserve which, instead of repelling, exercised a subtle attraction on all with whom she came in contact.

It was as Lady Macbeth that Mrs Siddons achieved her greatest triumphs, and her presentment of the combined rage, despair, and agonised remorse of the relentless murderess has never been surpassed. As Portia she was less happy, and as Rosalind her interpretation of the part would have been pronounced a failure in any other actress, for gaiety never sat naturally on her. Fanny Burney characterised her well in calling her the "living Melpomene," and Dr Johnson, writing to Mrs Thrale, showed rare insight into the great actress's private character when he said she "left nothing behind her to be censured or despised. Neither praise nor money, the two powerful corrupters of mankind, seemed to have depraved her."

Another actress famous in her day, though now forgotten, who sat both to Gainsborough and to Reynolds, was Mrs Yates, the second wife of Richard Yates the actor, and the widow of a Mr Graham. She acted as Margaret of Anjou in Dr Francklin's dreary tragedy of the Earl of Warwick, when, to quote her rival Kitty Clive, she "drowned the pit in tears, in spite of too much tottering about and plumping down"; and as the heroine in Arthur Murphy's "Orphan of China." Before Reynolds painted the portrait of Mrs Siddons as the



M^{rs} Siddons.

From the picture in the National Gallery, reproduced by the Antiquary Company.





*From the Mezzotint
by John Jones*

SIGNORA GIOVANNI BACELLI



LATER PORTRAITS OF AUTHORS, ETC.

Tragic Muse, Mrs Yates sat to Romney in the same character; and contemporary critics said that "as Romney was to Reynolds, so was the Tragic Muse Yates to the Tragic Muse Siddons."

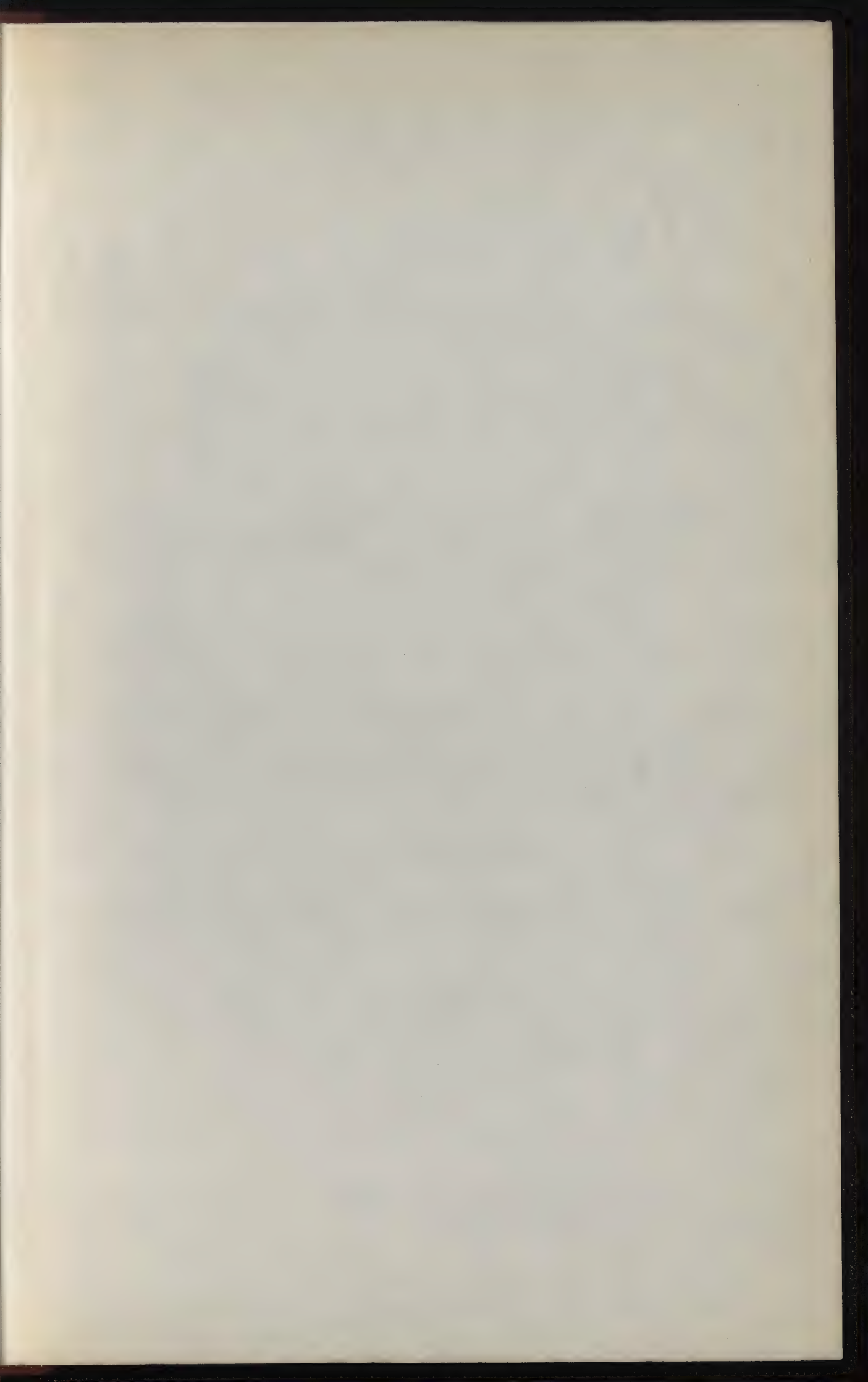
With the portraits of Mrs Siddons and Mrs Yates may be ranked that of George Coyte the actor, which was known as *Coyte Alive*, on account of the perfect likeness, and that of the charming Miss Bessy Brunton, who made her *début* in the "Grecian Daughter," at the early age of sixteen, and won great applause by her pleasing interpretation of the part.

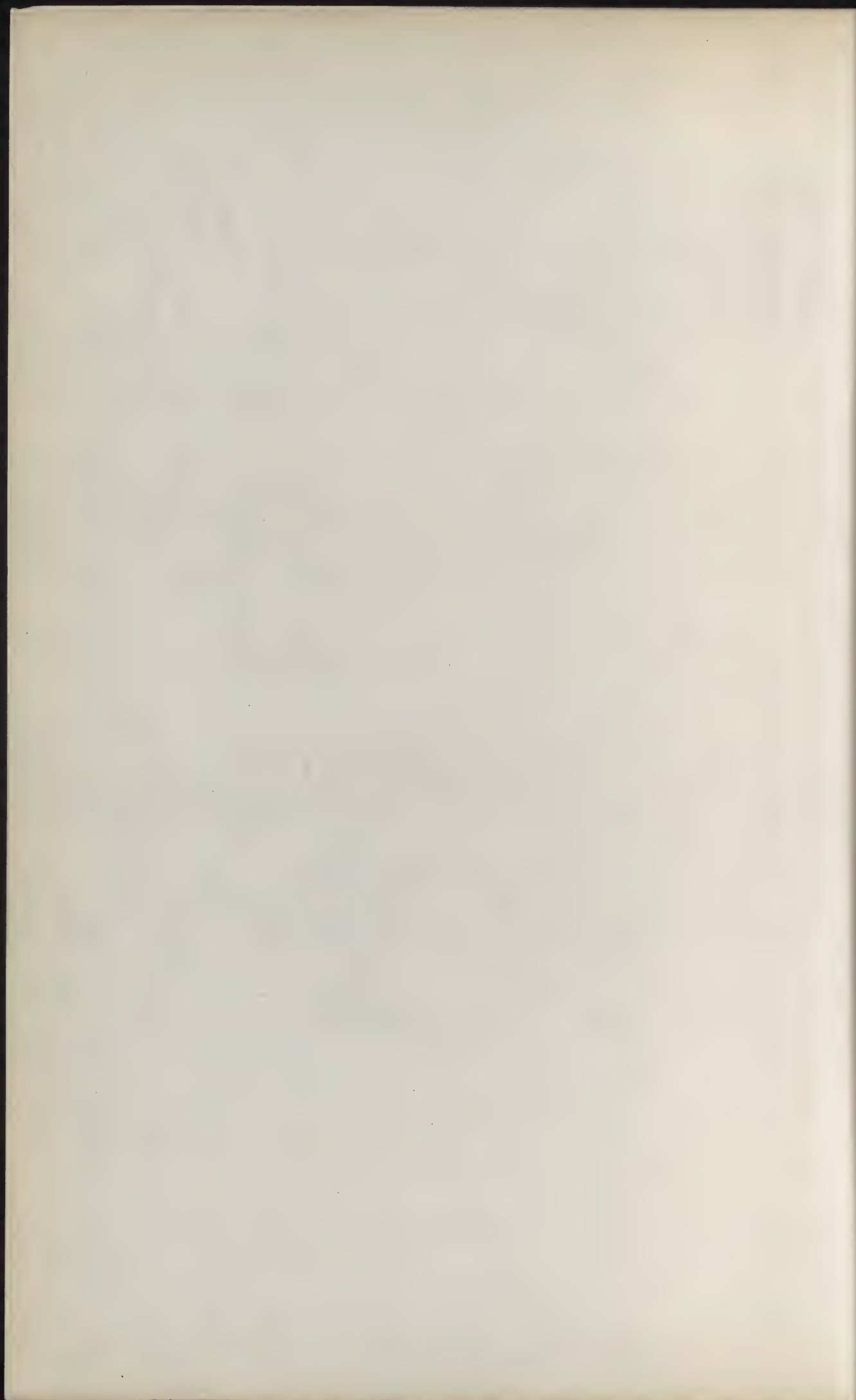
It does not seem to have been the fashion in the eighteenth century, as it is now, for famous painters to sit to each other, and the only two of his contemporary brothers of the brush of whom Gainsborough left completed likenesses were Philip De Loutherbourg and Benjamin West. The former, a foreigner who had settled in London in 1771, was a painter of landscape and historical subjects, who supplemented his more ambitious work by painting scenery at Drury Lane Theatre, then under the management of Gainsborough's friend Garrick, who probably introduced him to the great portrait painter. It was De Loutherbourg who in 1782 formed an exhibition of moveable pictures of English scenery, to which he gave the name of the Eidophusikon, with a view to proving that it was not necessary for English artists to go abroad for subjects. Gainsborough is said to have spent evening after evening at this show, gazing at what Dr Wolcot, "Peter Pindar," called De Loutherbourg's "brass skies and golden hills with marble bullocks in glass pastures grazing," and in his turn to have endeavoured to construct a mechanical apparatus for showing off his own work. This, says Fulcher, consisted "of a number of glass planes, which were moveable, and were painted by himself, representing various subjects, chiefly landscapes. They were lighted by candles at the back, and viewed through a magnifying lens, by which means the effect produced was truly captivating; the moonlight pieces, especially, exhibiting the most perfect resemblance to Nature."

Benjamin West, the talented American who, as has already been related, broke through the fatal traditions hampering the painter of historical subjects, and after a brilliantly successful career, became President of the Royal Academy on the death of Reynolds, must have been in the height of his popularity when he sat to Gainsborough, who was the one painter to share

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

his favour with the Royal Family. The "very pleasing man, simple, soft-mannered, cheerful and serene," as Fanny Burney called Benjamin West, was much laughed at in his day, Peter Pindar especially making great fun of his saints "with looks so thievish, with their skins of copper"; but for all that England owes him a debt of gratitude for the reforms he effected, and for the generous aid and encouragement he gave to many of the young artists who later won such renown for the English school of painting.







James O'Neil sculp.

London: Printed by J. O'Neil, 1789.

The Hon. Mrs. Lyndoch

From the painting by the Artist, in the Collection of the Hon. Mrs. Lyndoch

Chapter XII.

MISCELLANEOUS PORTRAITS PAINTED IN LONDON.

PORTRAITS OF BISHOP HURD, THE BISHOP OF FERNS, THE REV. DR ASHTON, AND THE REV. RICHARD GRAVES — PORTRAITS OF SIR WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, SIR JOHN SKINNER, LORD CHIEF BARON, EDWARD WILLES AND JUDGE PERRIN — PORTRAITS OF LORD HOOD, LORD RODNEY, AND ADMIRAL HOWE — PORTRAITS OF COLONEL TARLETON, GENERAL CONWAY, AND COLONEL ST LEGER — THE HELL-FIRE CLUB — PETER PINDAR'S SATIRE ON THE PORTRAITS OF COLONEL ST LEGER AND THE PRINCE OF WALES — THE "BLUE BOY," AND WHY IT WAS PAINTED — PORTRAIT OF LADY EMMA HAMILTON — PORTRAITS OF VARIOUS PRIVATE PERSONS — GAINSBOROUGH'S WEARINESS OF PORTRAIT PAINTING.

IN spite of the fact illustrated by the anecdote related in chapter ix., that Gainsborough was no church-goer, several divines sat for their portraits to him, including Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, who was surnamed the "Beauty of Holiness" on account of his handsome features and saintly life; John Garnett, Bishop of Ferns; Dr Ashton, Fellow of Eton College; and the Rev. Richard Graves, Rector of Caverton, Somerset. Lawyers, too, flocked to his studio, and the Peel family owns a very fine likeness of Sir William Blackstone, then Justice of the Common Pleas, the learned commentator on English law whose works are still textbooks to the legal student. Sir John Skinner, Lord Chief Baron, Edward Willes, Justice of the King's Bench, and Judge Perrin also sat to Gainsborough, but their portraits attracted little notice at the time.

Of the many sailors whose features were immortalised by Gainsborough, the most celebrated were Samuel, Lord Viscount Hood, who took a large share in the victory of

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Dominica, was elected Member for Westminster in the room of Charles Fox when that politician was thrown out through the unfair scrutiny of votes, and became Lord of the Admiralty the year of Gainsborough's death; Lord Rodney, winner in 1782 of the great naval victory mentioned above, which broke the power of the French and Spanish fleets, and did so much to promote the supremacy of England as a naval power; Captain Roberts, who was with Captain Cook when he was murdered at Hawaii; and Admiral Howe, winner of the battle of Ushant, which so fortunately broke up the French fleet at a critical moment for England.

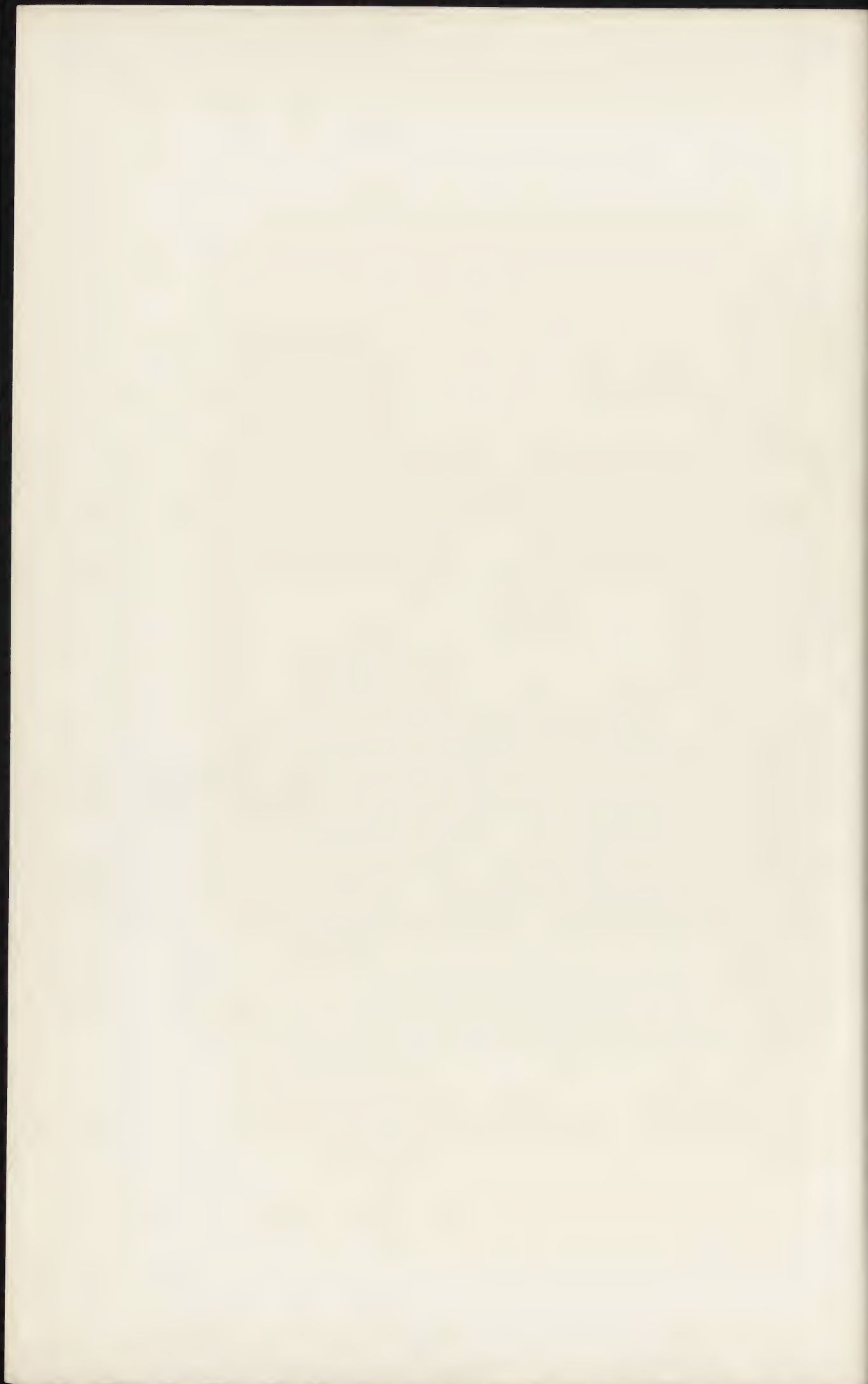
Amongst the many soldiers whose portraits Gainsborough painted in London were Colonel Tarleton, one of the most brilliant cavalry officers who took part in the disastrous American campaign; General Conway, whose motion in the House of Commons relating to the absolute power of King and Parliament in the American Colonies called forth Burke's first great speech; and the notorious Colonel St Leger, generally called "Handsome Jack," one of the most profligate of the Prince of Wales' many dissipated companions. The last-named portrait, which is now at Hampton Court, is ranked by art critics with those of Mrs Siddons, Garrick, and General Honeywood, as amongst the very best of Gainsborough's portraits, and was painted for the Prince of Wales; whilst a companion to it of His Royal Highness was given in exchange to the Colonel, and is still in the possession of the St Leger family. These fine likenesses were exhibited together at the Academy in 1781, and were but little noticed at the time except by Dr John Wolcot, who, as "Peter Pindar," wrote so many clever satires on the pictures of the day. He made merciless fun of them, saying :

"As for poor St Leger and the Prince,
Had I their places I should wince
Thus to be gibbeted for weeks on high,
Just like your felons after death
On Bagshot or on Hounslow-Heath,
That force from travellers the pitying sigh."

Horace Walpole wrote in his catalogue of the Exhibition against the name of Colonel St Leger: "like, but the lower parts too small in proportion."



SIR JOHN SKINNER



PORTRAITS PAINTED IN LONDON

"Handsome Jack" was no longer in his prime when he sat for his portrait, and in his once fine features the results of his wild life are only too clearly seen. Twenty years before, Horace Walpole, writing to Sir Horace Mann, tells of a dinner given by "your friend, St Leger," and other luxurious heroes, "who had bespoke it to the utmost extent of expense; one article was a tart made of Duke cherries from a hot-house, and another that they tasted but one glass out of each bottle of champagne." "The bill of fare is got into print," adds Walpole, "and with good people has produced the apprehension of another earthquake. St Leger . . . is the hero of all fashions. I never saw more dashing vivacity and absurdity with some flashes of gusto." St Leger is said to have been the founder of the notorious "Hell-Fire Club," consisting of about a dozen members of both sexes, who met, so said contemporary rumour, "on purpose to talk and act horrid improprieties." The Colonel also gave his name to the St Leger Stakes at Doncaster, and was as celebrated in his day for high play as for his other iniquities.

Of the many likenesses of private persons painted in London by Gainsborough, none attracted more notice at the time, or has more fully maintained its popularity since, than that of Master Jonathan Buttall, generally known as *The Blue Boy*, which is now in the possession of the Duke of Westminster. This remarkable work is said to have been painted with a view to the refutation of the rule laid down by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the eighth discourse delivered by him as President of the Royal Academy, to the effect that "the masses of light in a picture should be always of warm mellow colour, yellow, red, or a yellowish white, and that the blue, the grey, or the green colour, be kept almost entirely out of these masses, and be used only to support and set off those warm colours; and for this purpose a small proportion of cold colours will be sufficient."

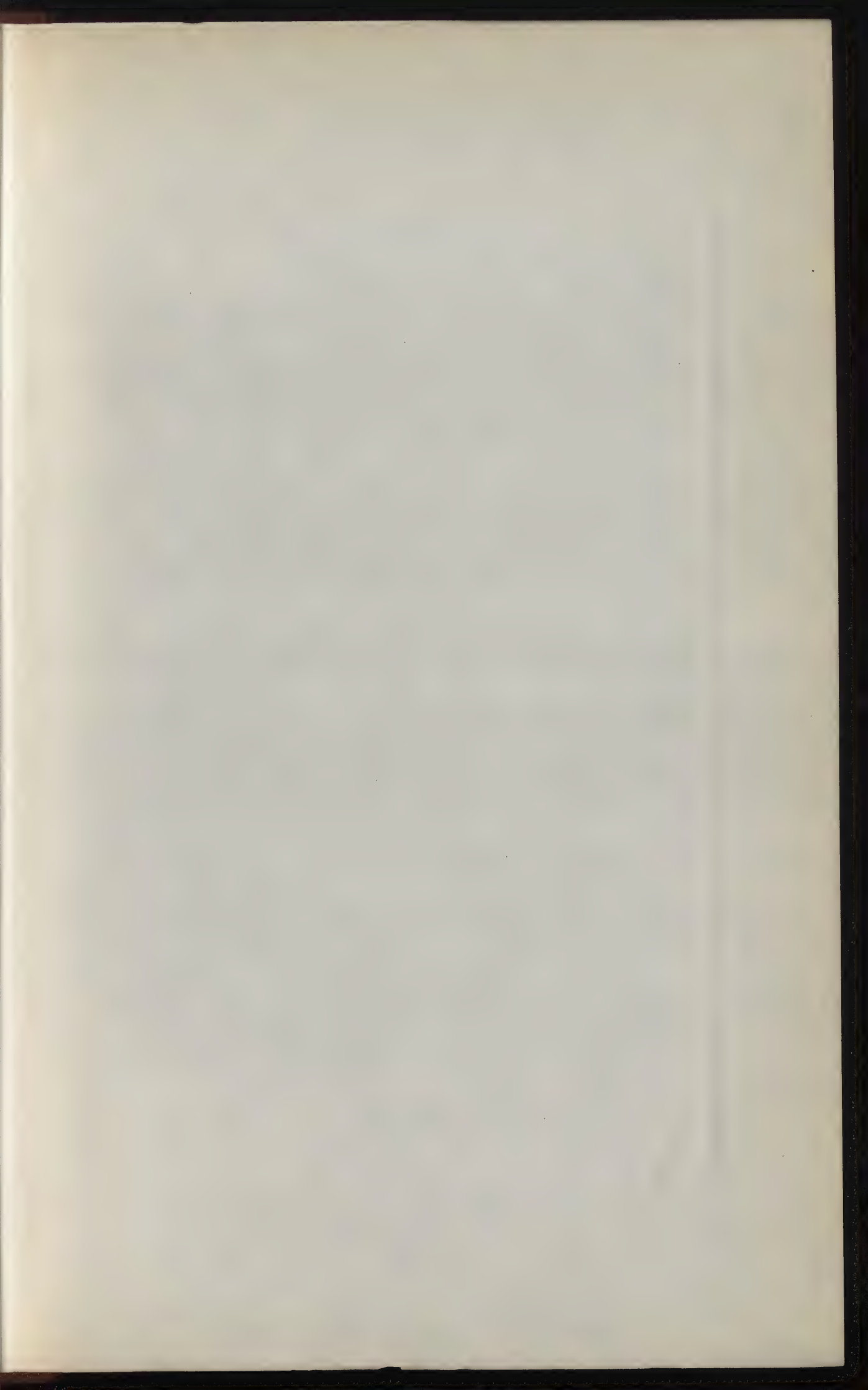
It is quite impossible at the present day to say whether this story is true or not; the question has been very hotly discussed by art critics, some asserting that *The Blue Boy* was painted as early as 1770, and that the passage quoted above was meant for a late criticism on it, whilst others are of opinion that the portrait was not undertaken till 1779—that is to say, the year after the delivery of the discourse.

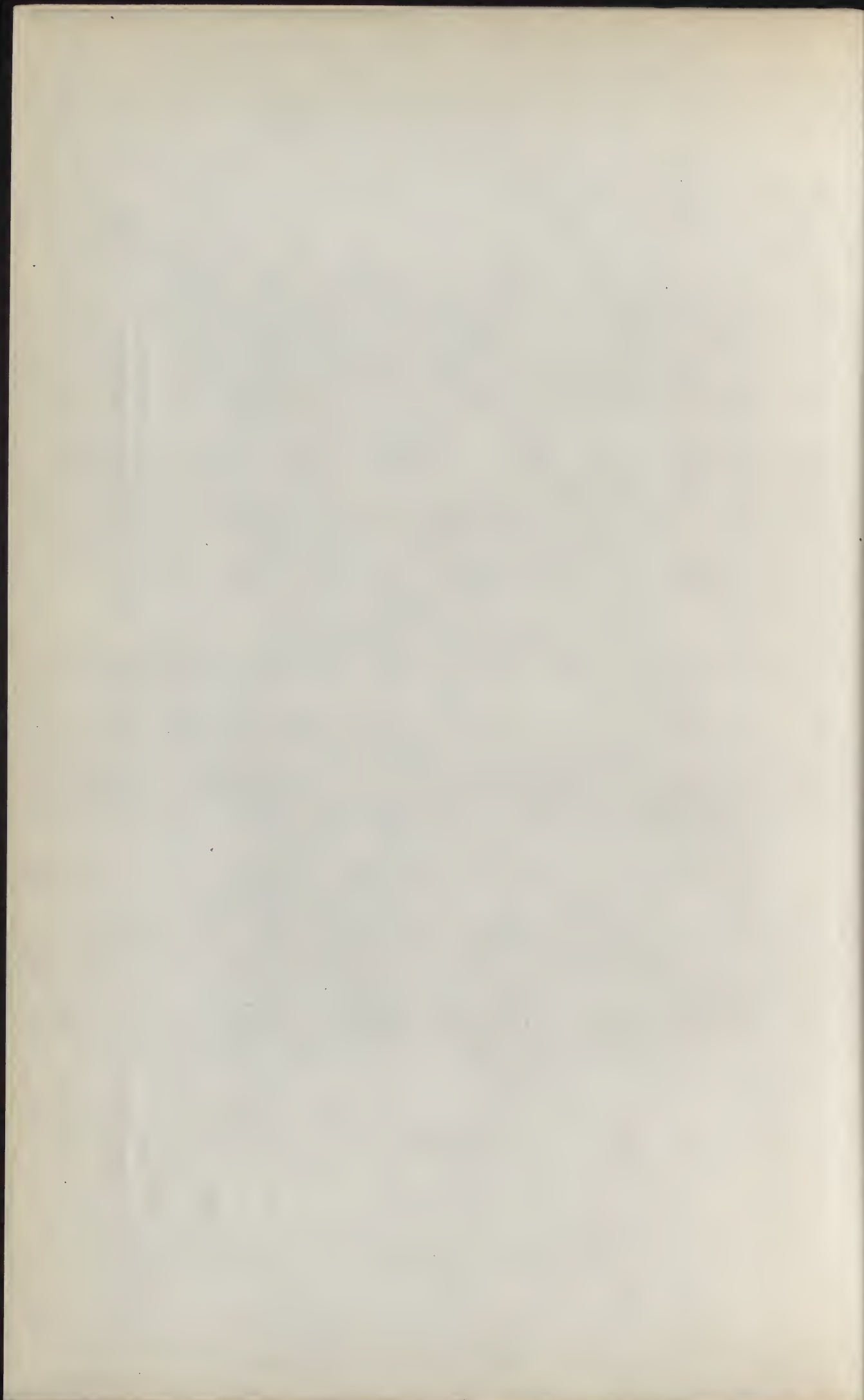
THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Whichever version be true, there is no doubt that the use of blue as the predominant, almost the only colour, was a bold and not altogether successful experiment,—the difficulty having been, as Gainsborough's young contemporary, Lawrence, pointed out, rather "ably combated than vanquished, . . . for Gainsborough has so mellowed and broken the blue with other tints that it is no longer the cold bleak colour Sir Joshua meant"; and, after all, though the picture is a very fine one, it cannot be doubted that a warmer tint for the dress would have made it still more agreeable to the eye. The Master Jonathan Buttall who was thus unexpectedly immortalised, was the son of an ironmonger living in Greek Street, Soho, who died in 1768, leaving the subject of the celebrated portrait his heir. The younger Jonathan carried on the business till 1796, when it was sold with other effects, including several drawings by Gainsborough, to Messrs Sharpe & Coxe. Some say that *The Blue Boy* also passed into the possession of these well-known auctioneers, but there is no evidence to prove it; and it seems more likely that, as others assert, it was privately sold after young Buttall's death to Mr Nesbit, from whom it was bought by the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV. From his hands it passed into those of Hoppner the artist, from whom it was purchased by Earl Grosvenor, passing as an heirloom to his successors after his death.

There are in existence several rival "Blue Boys," the owners of which periodically set up a claim to the possession of the original, and many copies have been made from the one owned by the Duke of Westminster, but there seems no doubt that that reproduced in this volume was the first, if not the only one painted by Gainsborough.

Other fine portraits painted about the same time as that of Jonathan Buttall were those of Emma Harte, afterwards Lady Hamilton, who also sat to Sir Joshua Reynolds and to Romney; Mr Mark Beaufoy, Mr and Mrs Henry Beaufoy; M. Vestris, the elder of the two celebrated French dancers who called himself *le dieu de la danse*; William Almack, founder of the celebrated club named after him; Merlin, the French mechanic, inventor of various ingenious automata; James Christie, the friend and patron of Gainsborough, to whom his portrait was presented, founder of the great firm of auctioneers still bearing his name; Mr and Mrs Langton,







Portrait of a young boy

Portrait of a young boy

Master Butts

The Blue Boy

in garden in the possession of Lady Anne the Duke of Westminster, &c.



*From the Mezzotint
by Thomas Park*

THE HON. MRS WATSON



PORTRAITS PAINTED IN LONDON

Lord Mountmorres, Mrs Buchanan M'Millan, Lady Clarges, Mrs Fane, Dorothea, Lady Eden, Mr and Mrs Delauney, Mr Ralph Schomberg, and the Baillie family, of which the two last named are now in the National Gallery.

These various lists of portraits do not, of course, represent anything like all the work of the kind done by Gainsborough, for not only those of note, but those who thought themselves of note, were eager to have their likenesses painted by him; and many amusing anecdotes are told of his brusque way of snubbing any sitter who failed to treat him with proper respect, or showed an undue appreciation of his own charms of person. One alderman, who was anxious that full justice should be done to the dimple in his well-developed chin, was dismissed with a "Damn it, I will paint neither the dimple nor the chin"; whilst another wealthy patron, whom Gainsborough overheard asking his servant for him as "that fellow," had his portrait spoiled at the last moment by the irate artist dashing the features out with his brush, exclaiming, "Where is that fellow now?" Whether these tales be true or not, there is no doubt that the lover of Nature, whose true vocation, in spite of his brilliant success in portraiture, was that of a landscape painter, must have suffered many things at the hands of those who kept him in London all through the spring and summer, never guessing how, as he himself pathetically said, "he longed to get out," away from the artificial to the true, seizing every spare moment to escape to the fields, bringing back with him to his London studio stumps of trees, flowers, and weeds, which he arranged in something like landscapes on his table, introducing pieces of looking-glass to represent ponds. Speaking of these quaint miniature presentments of natural scenes, his friend Jackson said: "He made little laymen for human figures, he modelled his horses and cows, and knobs of coal sat for rocks—nay, he carried this so far that he never chose to paint anything from invention when he could have the objects themselves. The limbs of trees which he collected would have made no inconsiderable woodrick, and many an ass"—the musician does not seem to have been speaking ironically—"has been led into his painting-room."

Chapter XIII.

LATER LANDSCAPES AND SUBJECT-PICTURES.

GAINSBOROUGH'S VISITS TO THE LAKES AND TO WORCESTERSHIRE
—THE LARGE LANDSCAPE OF 1777—"THE WOODMAN IN A
STORM"—"THE GIRL AND PIGS"—GAINSBOROUGH'S FEW SEA-
PIECES—UNSUCCESSFUL EXHIBITION AT SCHOMBERG HOUSE—
VISIT TO SUDBURY AND SENSATION MADE THERE—"THE
SHEPHERD BOY IN A SHOWER"—VARIOUS PICTURES OF JACK
HILL—HIS ADOPTION BY GAINSBOROUGH—ALLAN CUNNING-
HAM'S CRITICISM OF GAINSBOROUGH'S LANDSCAPES WITH
CHILDREN—THE "MUSIDORA" OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY
—"THE LADIES WALKING IN THE MALL."

DIFFICULT as it was to get away from his exigent patrons, Gainsborough did now and then manage to spend some time in the country; and though they were little appreciated during his lifetime, some of his most beautiful landscapes were produced during the last few years of his life. One brief, happy trip he made to the Lakes with his old friend Mr Kilderbee of Ipswich; and writing to a Mr Pearce, with whom he had become acquainted in London, he dwells on the delight he anticipates, adding that on his return he means to "mount all the Lakes at the next Exhibition in the great style; and, you know, if the people don't like them, 'tis only jumping into one of the deepest of them from off a wooded island, and my reputation will be fixed for ever."

A reference in this same letter to a visit to Worcestershire, during which he sent Mr Pearce a little perry, which he begs him and Mrs Pearce to drink and fancy it champagne for his sake, proves that he also visited that county. Doubtless many of the landscapes in the possession of Mrs Gainsborough on her husband's death were painted on these excursions, but, as they were neither named nor dated, their identification is impossible.

Of the exhibited landscapes, those which attracted most attention during the artist's lifetime were the large canvas





LATER LANDSCAPES AND SUBJECT-PICTURES

which was at the Academy in 1777, pronounced by Horace Walpole to be "by far the finest work of the kind ever painted in England," which led Peter Pindar to advise Gainsborough to leave portraits alone and pursue his charming *forte*—landscape: *The Woodman in the Storm* and *The Girl and Pigs*,—the former painted in 1787, the latter in 1782.

The Woodman, for which Gainsborough asked one hundred guineas, was not sold till after his death, when it was bought by his namesake, Lord Gainsborough, for five times that sum. It was unfortunately burnt with the rest of the owner's collection of pictures a few years later, but Peter Simon's print of it, and Mr Lane's copy of the sketch for it, show how full of poetry it was—the woodman's face calmly uplifted in awe of the God of the storm, contrasting with the abject terror of his dog crouching close to him.

The original *Girl and Pigs*, now in the Castle Howard Collection, a subject repeated four times by Gainsborough, was bought by Sir Joshua Reynolds for one hundred guineas, though the artist only asked twenty; and the President said of it that it was the best picture Gainsborough ever painted, adding that his only regret was that "the girl had not been made a beauty." Northcote, in his able review of Gainsborough's work, published soon after his death, remarked "that the expression and truth to Nature this picture displays were never surpassed"; and the dictum of two such experts as the President of the Royal Academy and the painter art-critic was quaintly endorsed by a countryman, who was overheard to say of the animals represented, though he took no notice of the maiden: "They be deedly like pigs; but nobody ever saw pigs feeding together but what one on 'em had a foot in the trough." It so happened that this much-admired group was hung in the same Exhibition as the fine likenesses of Colonel St Leger and of the Prince of Wales, already described (p. 116); and Peter Pindar proves his really unique critical acumen by precluding his satire on them with the lines quoted below, showing that he at least recognised Gainsborough's great strength as a landscape painter:—

"And now, O Muse, with song so big,
Turn round to Gainsborough's *Girl and Pig*—
Or pig and girl I rather should have said;
The pig in white, I must allow,
Is really a well-painted sow."

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Here follows the verse quoted *à propos* of the portraits, succeeded by the following lines :—

“Yet Gainsborough has great merit too,
Would he his charming *forte* pursue—
To mind his landscape have the modest grace ;
Yet there, sometimes are Nature's tints despised,
I wish them more attended to and prized
Instead of trumpery that usurps their place.”

Other open-air subjects specially noticed by contemporary critics were two small sea-pieces exhibited in 1781, of which Horace Walpole says they were “so free and natural that one steps back for fear of being splashed.” A larger sea-piece with boats and figures, supposed to have been painted about 1786, remarkable for its fine aerial perspective and masterly composition as a whole, though its details have been severely criticised ; and two Shepherd Boys with dogs fighting, exhibited in 1783, which Peter Pindar criticised less favourably than *The Girl with Pigs*, accusing Gainsborough of having copied the dogs from Snyders :

“Thy dogs are good,” he says, “but yet to make thee stare
The piece hath gained a number of deriders :
They tell thee genius in it had no share,
But that thou foully stol'st the curs from Snyders.
I do not blame thy borrowing a hint,
For, to be plain, there is nothing in't—
The man who scorns to do it is a log—
An eye, an ear, a tail, a nose,
Were modesty, one might suppose ;
But, zounds ! thou must not smuggle the whole dog.

O Gainsborough ! Nature 'plaineth sore
That thou hast kicked her out of door,
Who in her bounteous gifts hath been so free
To cull such genius out for thee—
Lo ! all thy efforts without her are vain !
Go, find her, kiss her, and be friends again.”

The Prince of Wales, who, whatever his faults, seems really to have loved art for art's sake, and to have appreciated Gainsborough's landscape work when none but the most advanced critics had discovered its excellence, at one time commissioned him to paint a pair of pictures in the style of the *Harvest Waggon* already referred to. For these, the only orders except the one from Lord Bateman (see p. 80), for landscape ever executed by Gainsborough, the artist is said to have received two



LANDSCAPE—EVENING



LATER LANDSCAPES AND SUBJECT-PICTURES

thousand guineas, a truly extravagant sum for those days. They were given by the Prince to Mrs Fitzherbert, and for some reason unexplained were in the possession of Mrs Gainsborough after her husband's death.

Gainsborough's quarrel with the Academy in 1784 led to his opening an Exhibition of his work in his own house in Pall Mall, but public opinion was not on his side in the matter in dispute, and hardly anybody responded to his invitations. Keenly mortified at this slight, following upon the unexpected readiness with which his brother Academicians had acceded to his request for the return of his contributions, Gainsborough resolved to leave town for a time. He went alone to Sudbury to stay with an old friend there, and the eager, admiring welcome given to him in his native town was balm to his wounded spirit.

An elderly lady, at whose house Gainsborough was a guest, told his biographer, Fulcher, that he was at this time "gay, very gay, and good-looking, creating a great sensation" when he made his appearance "in a rich suit of drab with laced ruffles and cocked hat." Old people still talked, adds Fulcher, writing in 1856, of the excitement caused in the town when they were children at the arrival of the great painter from London, come back "to exercise his elective franchise as a free burgess of the borough" in which he was born, when he proved himself to be still "a Tory of the old school."

From about the time of Gainsborough's return to London, refreshed and cheered by this visit to Sudbury, dates the celebrated *Mushroom Girl*, which may have been begun in Suffolk, and was given by the artist to his nephew, Gainsborough Dupont, who chose it out of a number of others, when not yet quite finished, because "it gave him an opportunity of observing how his uncle laid on his colours." It represents a country girl of rustic beauty who has fallen asleep whilst gathering mushrooms beneath the shade of an old elm tree. Her head is supported on her arm and the sunlight falls full upon her face, while beside her stands a young peasant looking down upon her with dawning love and admiration, and close by a little terrier gazes up at the intruder, not daring to bark for fear of waking the sleeper, but evidently anxious to express his displeasure at any one daring to approach her.

Other beautiful landscapes with figures, of uncertain date, are *The Cottage Girl with her Dog and Pitcher*, painted from the

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

same model as the more celebrated *Girl and Pigs*; *The Shepherd Boy in a Shower*, in which, beautiful and pathetic as it is, "like a vision breathed on canvas," to quote Hazlitt's description of a copy from it, Gainsborough made the strange mistake of placing the boy on the wrong side of the hedge; *The Watering Place* in the National Gallery, an idyllic scene with cattle and goats in a pool of water; and the various pictures of Jack Hill, in his cottage or elsewhere.

The Jack Hill who was so often painted by Gainsborough was first seen by the great artist, who was to render him immortal, on one of his visits to Richmond, where he had lodgings in the summer during the last few years of his life. To these lodgings Gainsborough and his wife, with Margaret, the one daughter left to them, often retired for a few days' rest and change when it was possible to get away from engagements with sitters; and Gainsborough is said to have enriched many poor parents in Richmond by his liberal rewards to them when they allowed their children to pose for him. Jack Hill, the son of a woodman, was a well-grown, handsome lad when Gainsborough first saw him, and the painter, who had no son, took such a fancy to him that he persuaded his father to let him take him back to London with him. There, Mrs Fischer, the painter's daughter, who, it will be remembered, was childless and unhappy, fell in love with him and offered to adopt him. Jack, however, used to the wild life of the woods, could not brook the restraints of a town: he objected strongly to be constantly dressed in fine clothes to be shown off to Mrs Fischer's visitors, and still more to having to pose to the painter. He ran away more than once, always to be kindly received on his return, but at last he disappeared altogether. After Gainsborough's death, however, his widow traced the truant, and got him into Christ's Hospital, but what eventually became of him has never been discovered.

Many are the less well-known landscapes undoubtedly from the hand of Gainsborough, in which the children with whom he made friends in his country excursions figure in all their wild and natural charm, now playing about some rustic cottage, now disporting themselves in wood or mead, their loveliness enhanced by the rich colouring in which the whole scene is steeped. "Gainsborough's children," says Allan Cunningham, who, from his own open-air life was



MUSIDORA BATHING HER FEET



LATER LANDSCAPES AND SUBJECT-PICTURES

so admirably fitted to judge of English landscape work, "have a charm which is more deeply felt by comparing them with those of Reynolds. The children of Sir Joshua are indeed beautiful creations, free, artless, and lovely; but they seem all to have been nursed in velvet laps and fed with golden spoons. There is a rustic grace, an untamed wildness, about the children of the other, which speak of the country and of neglected toilets. They are the offspring of Nature, running free among woods as wild as themselves. They are not afraid of disordering their satins and wetting their kid shoes. They roll on the greensward, burrow like rabbits, and dabble in the running streams daily."

"The works of Reynolds and Gainsborough," adds this sympathetic critic, "are unlike each other, but both differ more materially from those of the great painters of Italy. The infants of Raphael, Titian, or Correggio, are not meant for mortals, but for divinities. We hardly think of mothers' bosoms when we look at them. We admire—we can scarcely love them so much as we do the healthy children of our two eminent countrymen."

Of the very few subject-pictures painted by Gainsborough, one of the most remarkable is the *Musidora washing her Feet*, now in the National Gallery, the sole example of a nude figure from the hand of the great landscape and portrait painter, and a very beautiful rendering of Thomson's description of the fair maiden "come to bathe her fervent limbs in the refreshing stream." Musidora is sitting in a graceful attitude by a stream overshadowed by trees, dabbling with one foot in the water, whilst she loosens the sandal on the other. The "thrice happy swain" whose fate is to be decided at the first sight of her has not yet appeared upon the scene, but already his approach is shadowed forth by the deepening colour in her cheeks, which glow not only with the "sultry season" in the "cool retreat," but with maiden bashfulness.

Equally unique of its kind is the spirited composition reproduced in this volume, known as *Ladies walking in the Mall, St James' Park*, where groups of figures gather about the Royal party, and in which Gainsborough has introduced his own portrait, sketching the animated scene. Watteau-like in colour and in grouping, full of atmosphere and vivacity, this bit of contemporary life excels anything of the kind

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

painted by Fragonard, Lancret, or even Watteau himself: "All a-flutter like a ladies' fan," said Horace Walpole in his concise and witty way; and Northcote, a better judge than the satirist, whether consciously or unconsciously, hit upon the same simile, saying: "You would suppose that such a subject would be stiff and formal, with the straight rows of trees, and people sitting on benches—it is all in motion, and in a flutter like a lady's fan. Watteau is not half so airy."

Chapter XIV.

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

GLIMPSES OF GAINSBOROUGH'S HOME-LIFE DURING HIS LAST YEARS
—HIS MODE OF PAINTING—HIS DAUGHTER MARGARET—HIS
PRESENTIMENT OF COMING DEATH—THE TRIAL OF WARREN
HASTINGS — SUPPOSED CHILL TAKEN BY GAINSBOROUGH
AT THE TRIAL—FAREWELL INTERVIEW WITH SIR JOSHUA
REYNOLDS—HIS DEATH AND FUNERAL—SALE OF HIS PICTURES
AT SCHOMBERG HOUSE.

THE last few years of Gainsborough's life seem to have been full of the greatest peace and happiness. The very few letters preserved breathe a spirit of absolute content, and, short as they are, are full of affectionate regard for his relations and friends. He tells his sister, Mrs Gibbon, that he is living at the rate of a thousand a year; yet he had always plenty of money to spare for those less fortunate than himself. Even his old kindly-intentioned but tactless friend Thicknesse, proud as he was of having, as he thought, launched the artist on his successful London career, was not above receiving pecuniary assistance from him, and many were the young artists whom the great painter helped with money and instruction. His right hand, however, never knew what his left was doing; and just as he neglected to sign his works, so he left no tell-tale memoranda to reveal to posterity the gifts he so readily lavished on all who appealed to him. Often indeed, as in the case already referred to of his giving the beautiful *Boy at the Stile* to Colonel Hamilton in return for his fine playing of a solo on the violin, the reward was quite out of proportion to the service rendered. More than one story is told of his impulsive generosity, such as how he gave some twenty drawings to a lady, who pasted them on her walls, or presented a portrait worth a hundred guineas or more to a sitter who had done him some quite trifling favour.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Allan Cunningham, the author of the charming cameo-like biographies of the great English painters of the eighteenth century, was a child of four years old when Gainsborough died, and must have heard much about him from those who had known him personally. He gives a few vividly-portrayed glimpses into the London life, describing first how Gainsborough painted standing, using pencils with shafts some two yards long, so that he stood as far from his picture as from his sitter, and then telling how the painter rose early, commenced work between nine and ten o'clock, wrought for four or five hours, and then gave up the rest of the day to visits, to music, and to domestic enjoyment. "He loved," adds Cunningham, "to sit by the side of his wife during the evenings and make sketches of whatever occurred to his fancy, all of which he threw below the table, save such as were more than commonly happy, and these were preserved and either finished as sketches or expanded into paintings."

What gleanings might have been made from these crumbs flung beneath the table of the richly-gifted student of Nature, and what an insight into the humble nature of the man who kept only "such sketches as were uncommonly happy," though he must by this time have known full well that everything from his hand would have its money value for his children if not for himself.

His daughter Margaret, who never married, still lived at home with her parents, and from certain half-hints given by her father's biographers, would seem to have developed a very melancholy disposition as time went on. She refused, said one, to sing to Queen Charlotte, who had expressed a wish to hear her, and grew more and more retiring as she left her youth behind her. That she loved and appreciated her father is incidentally proved by various references to her in the very few letters which have been preserved, and her admiration for him was recognised by his fellow Royal Academicians after his death in their presentation to her of a fine piece of plate designed by Sir Benjamin West, which is now in the possession of the Rev. Edward Gardiner, several times referred to in the course of this narrative.

Already, alas, in 1787 the note of coming change in Gainsborough's simple, unaffected home-life was sounded; and the great painter, though for a short time he kept his

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

own counsel, knew that his days were numbered. It is related that early in 1787, when he and his beloved friend Sheridan were dining at Sir George Beaumont's, he gave these two kindred spirits a hint of the depression which was beginning to weigh upon him. He seemed unable to respond to the sallies of wit from Sheridan, which he generally met with ready repartee, and presently he asked the latter to leave the room with him. Then, to quote from Allan Cunningham's account, he said: "Now, don't laugh, but listen. I shall die soon, I know it—I feel it—I have less time to live than my looks infer—but for this I care not. What oppresses my mind is this—I have many acquaintances but few friends; and as I wish to have one worthy man to accompany me to the grave, I am desirous of bespeaking you—will you come—ay or no?"

Sheridan, of course, rallied his friend on these melancholy forebodings, but Gainsborough would not let him return to the dining-room till the promise had been given. Having obtained it, however, he seemed cheered, and the rest of the evening he was quite himself.

Not long after this incident began the famous trial of Warren Hastings in Westminster Hall, to which even Gainsborough, retiring though he generally was, was drawn by the intense interest it excited. To it flocked all the rank and fashion of London, and the competition for tickets of admission was so keen that fifty guineas were given for a single seat. As the dreary proceedings, however, dragged their weary length through the eight years the trial lasted, public excitement gradually subsided, until, when it finally ended with a verdict of acquittal, there were but few spectators, and of the numerous peers who had been so eager for the impeachment, only twenty-nine were present to vote.

The biographers of Gainsborough merely mention his presence in Westminster Hall without specifying exactly when he was there; but, as the trial began on February 13th, and he did not die till September, the probability is that he attended more than once, and that he was not only a witness of the imposing opening proceedings, but that he listened to the greater part of Burke's four days' oration, considered one of that statesman's finest speeches, disfigured though it was by its too evidently acrimonious bias against the accused.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

As the last great spectacle on which the eyes of Gainsborough rested, the appearance of Westminster Hall on the momentous occasion of the impeachment deserves a somewhat detailed description.

The ancient walls, which had witnessed the trial of Strafford, and later of his treacherous master, Charles I., who there met his accusers with the proud and patient dignity which did so much to revive the enthusiasm of his adherents, were hung with scarlet cloth, and the approaches to the entrances were lined with troops. The central space was occupied by a table reserved to the Chancellor, the Judges, the Masters in Chancery, the Clerks, etc., beyond which, on the right, were the seats for Peers, and on the left these for the Archbishops and Bishops. At the upper end of the hall, facing the lawyers' table, was the Grand Chamberlain's box, with the benches set apart for the members of the House of Commons on the left, and opposite to them the seats of the Peeresses and Peers' daughters. At the lower end of the hall was the Royal box, deserted throughout the proceedings by its usual occupants, the impeachment being altogether against the wishes of the King, so that it was only *incognito* that any of the ladies of his family were able to be present. Just below the Grand Chamberlain's box was that allotted to the prisoner, with the space reserved for his counsel on the right, and that for his prosecutors, or, as they were then called, the "Managers of the Committee" in charge of his trial, on the left. All along the upper portions of the hall ran galleries appropriated to the various great officials, to which their friends were admitted by ticket; and from one of these Queen Caroline and the four elder princesses watched with emotions which can well be imagined the preparations for the reception as a prisoner of the man whom they had ever been delighted to honour.

No words could adequately describe the thrill of expectation which, on February 13th, 1788, ran through the spectators, amongst whom was Gainsborough, with many of those who had lately sat to him, including Queen Caroline and the four elder princesses, the Duchess of Devonshire, Mrs Siddons, and Mrs Sheridan, when, after a long delay, the doors were at last thrown open, and those who were to occupy the body of the hall were ushered in in solemn procession.

With what mixed feelings must the great painter have

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

looked down on the wonderful scene, many of the chief actors in which were his personal friends: first came the Commons, headed by Burke as leader of the prosecution, his noble features set in stern resolve; then Fox, the erratic setter at defiance of convention, for once in careful dress, with bag and sword; then Sheridan, the versatile genius, now beginning his political career, whom Gainsborough had known from his early days at Bath; then Wyndham, the courtly and chivalrous gentleman, as yet only twenty-eight years old, whose portrait was one of the most successful likenesses Gainsborough had lately painted; and the yet younger Grey, later as Lord Grey, to become so great a leader; followed by the rank and file of the Commons, who took their places with a good deal of crushing and confusion. To those behind the scenes who had watched the long course of intrigue which had culminated in the impeachment of a man who had done more than any other to increase the power of England, the absence from this great gathering of Pitt, on whom Hastings had so confidently relied, was far more significant than the presence of anyone else. He had refused to conduct the impeachment, it is true, but that he allowed it to be conducted at all will ever be a blot on his memory.

The Committee of the Prosecution having seated themselves in their box, the heralds, in their quaint mediæval costumes, marshalled in the long procession of the various officials and dignitaries who were to be the witnesses of the prosecution they had all more or less contributed to bring about. The stately pageant was headed by the Judges who were to decide on disputed points of law; then the Archbishops and Bishops, with 70 Peers, all in their coronation robes, who, having silently and solemnly taken the places assigned to them, were succeeded by the Duke of Norfolk as Earl Marshal of the Kingdom, with all the great Court dignitaries and the Princes of the blood, all of whom, except perhaps the Heir-Apparent, were probably anxious for the acquittal of the prisoner. Last of all, fitting close to the long and dignified pageant, walked the Chancellor in his heavy State garments, his train upheld by pages.

When all were seated, ensued a brief pause pregnant with weighty issues, during which the silence of suspense was so intense that every rustle of a ribbon, every flutter of a fan, was distinctly audible. Then the loud voice of a herald

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

summoned Warren Hastings to come forth and answer the charges brought against him. Preceded by the gentleman-usher of the Black Rod, and with the two friends, Sullivan and Summer, who had gone bail for him, one on either hand, the accused walked firmly forward, his dignified bearing giving the lie to the foul charges against him, and bowing courteously to the Chancellor and Judges, he advanced without faltering to the bar to drop on his knees before it. The humiliation of being compelled to assume this attitude must indeed have been overwhelming to the man who not long before had had thousands prostrate at his feet; but it was over in less than a moment, for, almost as he touched the ground, a herald proclaimed that he was free to rise, and facing his judges, he bowed once more to them. Fanny Burney, who was permitted several times to be present during the trial, gives a vividly impressive description of the prisoner's bearing throughout its long anguish, and with many a masterly touch brings out the character of those who were the most eager in their invectives against him. She tells how, to the Lord Chancellor's opening speech, uttered in a calm, equal, solemn manner, and in a voice mellow and penetrating, Hastings, leaning over the bar, answered with much agitation, though with evident efforts to suppress it: "My Lords, Impressed—deeply impressed—I come before your lordships equally confident in my own integrity and in the justice of the court before which I am to clear it." Fanny Burney had known Mr Hastings and his idolised wife in happier days; and now, when, as one of the lawyers read out the charges in a monotonous voice, the prisoner gazed round on every side, hoping to meet some friendly glance, she comments on the "dreadful harass" in his countenance, and hopes that he will not notice her looking on apparently calmly at his suffering. Now Burke, now Sheridan, now Wyndham, when their duties as Managers permitted it, went to speak to the authoress of "Evelina," who naïvely says that, much as she had once loved and revered the greatest of all the orators, she could hardly bear to speak to the "cruel persecutor." Now she describes his evident emotion at her coldness and her own relief at his departure, but admits that he at least was acting according to his conviction. It was different, she adds, with Fox, who worked himself up to the necessary pitch of emotion when he spoke, but was

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

equally calm before and after his most impassioned utterances. Of Sheridan, too, though he made his political reputation by his speeches, she strongly disapproves; because he already neglects his lovely wife, and he has turned against Hastings for mere party reasons. Wyndham she almost wins over to her own way of thinking, for, though he had pondered long on the speeches he had intended to make, he, in the end, only came forward when it was absolutely necessary to support his leader Burke. She touches Wyndham to the heart by her reference to their lost friend Dr Johnson. She appeals to his chivalry for Hastings when he alludes to the impediment in the Governor-General's speech which makes it so hard for him to defend himself in replying to the great orators pitted against him. To her regret she one day notices Sir Joshua Reynolds in the Committee box amongst the prisoner's most bitter enemies; but he makes her a sign that he has not got his trumpet, perhaps to assure her that he does not mean to listen to what is going on. Once, she says, she brushed against Hastings himself as he and she were leaving the Court, and he cried with an assumed gaiety, infinitely touching under the circumstances: "I must come here to see Miss Burney, for I meet her nowhere else."

Could the eyes of those who watched the dispersing crowds on the first days of this protracted trial have been opened to the future, what pathos would have been added to the greetings between friends; for of all who so eagerly thronged to hear the impeachment, but few survived to be present at the acquittal. Neither Gainsborough nor Reynolds saw the end, and on the former the finger of death had already, though he knew it not, set his seal. Even as the great painter looked down upon the tragic scene, he felt the touch of that icy monitor, and the remembrance of the presentiment he had expressed to Sheridan, which had for a time been in abeyance, shot across his mind. He was sitting with his back to an open window, and his attention had been too much enthralled with what was going on to notice the draught, when, to use his own words, he "suddenly felt something inexpressibly cold touch his neck."

On his return home he mentioned this circumstance to his wife, who examined the place where the strange sensation had occurred, but could see nothing to justify the terror her

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

husband's words aroused. Gainsborough, however, still complained of the intense cold in the back of his neck, and confessed that he felt ill and nervous. It was decided that a doctor should be sent for. First Dr Heberden, the learned author of "Medical Commentaries on the History and Cure of Disease," and then Mr John Hunter, surgeon, were consulted; but both agreed that the cold spot was only a glandular swelling, which would disappear with the warmer weather. Gainsborough himself tried to believe them, and in a letter to his friend, Mr Pearce, supposed to have been among the last he wrote, he said: "I am extremely obliged to you and Miss Pearce for your kind inquiries. I hope I am now getting better, as the swelling is considerably increased and more painful." Then, dismissing the subject of his own suffering with characteristic abruptness, he adds: "We have just received nine cheeses from Bath, and beg the favour of you to accept two of them."

Soon after writing this would-be cheerful note, Gainsborough tried what change of air would do by going to Richmond, but it was all in vain; and finding that the suffering in his neck and its consequent weakness only increased, he returned to his London house. Here his sister, Mrs Gibbon, who had probably come from Bath on account of his illness, joined him, and to her he said quite frankly, but calmly: "If this be cancer, I am a dead man." Mr Hunter was again consulted, and various physicians were called in, who now all pronounced the disease to be as Gainsborough seems to have suspected from the first, cancer. The doctors could, of course, do no real good, but they suggested certain ameliorations, and the great artist set to work at once to arrange his worldly affairs, fearing that as time went on his mental faculties might become clouded by the intensity of his sufferings.

He made his will, leaving everything to his wife and his unmarried daughter Margaret, adding certain verbal instructions about what was to be given to Mrs Fischer. Mrs Gainsborough was made executrix, and Mr Kilderbee of Ipswich trustee, or, as the testator expressed it, "overseer"; and all being thus settled, Gainsborough worked quietly on with the assistance of his nephew, young Dupont, all through the spring and early summer; but at the beginning of July he felt that the end was near, and sent for his special friends one by one to bid them good-bye, reminding Sheridan of the

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

promise made to him the year before to be present at his funeral. The only thing which seems to have troubled his conscience at all, now that his life was closing, was the scant courtesy he had shown to Sir Joshua Reynolds; and he wrote to him a very touching little note to which Sir Joshua himself referred in his generous eulogy of his great rival four months after his death: "Of Gainsborough," he said, "we certainly know that his passion was not the enjoyment of riches, but excellence in his art. . . . That he felt this ruling passion strong in death, I am myself a witness. A few days before he died, he wrote me a letter to express his acknowledgments for the good opinion I entertained of his abilities, and the manner in which (he had been informed), I always spoke of him; and desired he might see me once more before he died. I am aware how flattering it is to myself to be thus connected with the dying testimony which this excellent painter bore to his art. But I cannot prevail on myself to suppress that I was not connected with him by any habits of familiarity: if any little jealousies had subsisted between us, they were forgotten in those moments of sincerity; and he turned towards me as one who was engrossed by the same pursuits, and who deserved his good opinion, by being sensible of his excellence. Without entering into a detail of what passed at this last interview, the impression of it upon my mind was, that his regret at losing life was principally the regret of leaving his art; and more especially as he now began, he said, to see what his deficiencies were; which, he said he flattered himself, in his last works were in some measure supplied."

What else passed at this touching death-bed scene between the two men who, so different in everything else, were so alike in their enthusiasm for their art, can never now be known: only one other touch was added by Sir Joshua to the reserved account he gave in the words just quoted, of what he must have felt to be a sacred interview. As he was turning to leave the room, the dying artist whispered with a smile, having perhaps in his mind his colour controversy with his visitor: "We are all going to Heaven, and Vandyck is of the company."

A few days later, on August 2nd, 1788, Gainsborough died. In accordance with a wish he expressed just before the end, he was buried in Kew Churchyard, close to his old friend

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

Joshua Kirby. Gainsborough Dupont acted as chief mourner, and the pall was borne by Sir Joshua Reynolds, Benjamin West, Sir William Chambers, Paul Sandby, Francis Cotes, and Bartolozzi the engraver, all members of the Royal Academy, who forgot their disapprobation of their great colleague now that he could no longer wound their susceptibilities by his indifference to their opinion. Among the mourners were Sheridan, with his brother-in-law, Linley the musician, Myers the miniature painter, and Trimmer, both sons-in-law of Joshua Kirby.

Gainsborough's wife and daughter survived him for many years, but nothing is known of their life after his death, except that Mrs Gainsborough and Margaret remained for some time longer in Schomberg House, where a sale of the pictures in their possession took place after having been exhibited for a few weeks. On Mrs Gainsborough's death in 1798, she was buried beside her husband.

The pictures left at Schomberg House on Gainsborough's death were thirty-eight landscapes, including *The Woodman and his Dog in a Storm* already described, now only known from engravings; portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, now in Buckingham Palace; a Group of a Peasant and his family outside a cottage door; a Fox hunt; Two Boys; a View of St James' Park, with figures; copies of portraits of James Stewart, Duke of Richmond and Lenox, of his two sons, of the Duke of Arenburg, Inigo Jones, and the whole Pembroke family, with two unnamed portraits, all after Vandyck; the Cornaro family, after Titian; *The Conspirators*, after Velasquez; a man's head, after Rembrandt; *Abraham and Isaac*, and *The Good Shepherd*, both after Murillo, the latter painted from memory.

The greater number of the pictures just enumerated were sold at what would now be considered very low prices, from Schomberg House, and the remainder were disposed of by auction by Christie on June 2nd, 1792.



*From the Mezzotint
by H. Birche*

BOYS AND DOGS





*From the Mezzotint
by Charles Turner*

THE LITTLE COTTAGER



Chapter XV.

CONTEMPORARY AND MODERN CRITICISM.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS' DISCOURSE ON GAINSBOROUGH—CONSTABLE'S OPINION OF HIS LANDSCAPE WORK—THE VERDICT OF RUSKIN—REDGRAVE'S APPRECIATION OF GAINSBOROUGH AS A LANDSCAPE PAINTER—BROCK-ARNOLD'S CRITICISM OF THE CRITICS—WALTER ARMSTRONG'S INDIFFERENCE TO GAINSBOROUGH'S LANDSCAPES—HIS COMPARISON OF GAINSBOROUGH AS A PORTRAIT PAINTER WITH SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS—A DRAMATIC CRITIC ON GAINSBOROUGH'S WORK—THE "MRS SIDDONS" AND "MRS BEAUFOY" COMPARED—CONCLUSION.

FOUR months after the death of Gainsborough, Sir Joshua Reynolds delivered to the students of the Royal Academy assembled in the large upper room of Somerset House, that remarkable discourse on the character of his great rival, his excellences and his defects, which is still endorsed almost entirely by the best judges of landscape and portrait painting. After a few general remarks on the loss the profession had sustained by the early death of the master, and after comparing him with certain Italian painters then greatly admired, the President said: "For my own part, I confess I take more interest in, and am more captivated with, the powerful impression of Nature which Gainsborough exhibited in his portraits and in his landscapes, and the interesting simplicity and elegance of his little ordinary beggar-children, than with any of the works of that school since the time of Andrea Sacchi, or perhaps we may say Carlo Maratti, two painters who may truly be said to be *Ultimi Romanorum*. . . .

"It may not be improper to make mention of some of the customs and habits of this extraordinary man, points which come more within the reach of an observer. I, however, mean such only as are connected with his art, and indeed were, as I apprehend, the causes of his arriving to that high degree of excellence which we see and acknowledge in his

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

works. Of these causes we must state as the fundamental the love which he had to his art, to which, indeed, his whole mind appears to have been devoted, and to which everything was referred; and this we may fairly conclude from various circumstances of his life which were known to his intimate friends. Among others, he had a habit of continually remarking to those who happened to be about him, whatever peculiarity of countenance, whatever accidental combination of figure, or happy effects of light and shadow, occurred in prospects, in the sky, in walking the streets, or in company. If in his walks he found a character that he liked, and whose attendance was to be obtained, he ordered him to his house; and from the fields he brought into his painting-room stumps of trees, weeds, and animals of various kinds, and designed them, not from memory, but immediately from the objects. He even framed a kind of model of landscapes on his table composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees, and water. How far this latter practice may be useful in giving hints the professors of landscape can best determine. Like every other technical practice, it seems to me wholly to depend on the general talent of him who uses it. Such methods may be nothing better than contemptible and mischievous trifling, or they may be aids. I think, upon the whole, unless we constantly refer to real Nature, that practice may be more likely to do harm than good. I mention it only as it shows the solicitude and extreme activity which he had about everything that related to his art; that he wished to have his objects embodied, as it were, and distinctly before him; that he neglected nothing which could keep his faculties in exercise, and derived hints from every sort of combination.

“We must not forget, whilst we are on this subject, to make some remarks on his custom of painting by night, which confirms what I have already mentioned—his great affection to his art—since he could not amuse himself in the evening by any other means so agreeable to himself. I am indeed much inclined to believe that it is a practice very advantageous and improving to an artist; for by this means he will acquire a new and a higher perception of what is great and beautiful in Nature. By candle-light not only objects appear more beautiful, but from their being in a greater breadth of light

CONTEMPORARY AND MODERN CRITICISM

and shadow, as well as having a greater breadth and uniformity of colour, Nature appears in a higher style, and even the flesh seems to take a higher and richer tone of colour. Judgment is to direct us in the use to be made of this method of study, but the method itself is, I am very sure, advantageous. I have often imagined that the two great colourists, Titian and Correggio, though I do not know that they painted by night, formed their high ideas of colouring from the effects of objects by this artificial light; but I am more assured that whoever attentively studies the first and best manner of Guercino will be convinced that he either painted by this light or formed his manner on this conception.

“Another practice Gainsborough had which is worth mentioning, as it is certainly worthy of imitation. I mean his manner of forming all the parts of his picture together, the whole going on at the same time, in the same manner as Nature creates her works. Though this method is not uncommon to those who have been regularly educated, yet probably it was suggested to him by his own natural sagacity. That this custom is not universal appears from the practice of a painter whom I have just mentioned, Pompeo Battoni, who finished his historical pictures part after part, and in his portraits completely finished one feature before he proceeded to another. The consequence was, as might be expected, the countenance was never well expressed, and, as the painters say, the whole was not well put together.”

Here Sir Joshua paused for a moment, and then, resuming his discourse with a manner betraying the emotion he still felt at the memory of his last interview with Gainsborough, he gave the account already quoted of the last time he had seen the subject of his criticism. Passing on, then, to a review of the work left behind him by Gainsborough, he said:

“It must be remembered that the style and department of art which Gainsborough chose, and in which he so much excelled, did not require that he should go out of his own country for the objects of his study; they were everywhere about him, he found them in the streets, and in the fields; and from the models thus accidentally found he selected with great judgment such as suited his purpose. As his studies

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

were directed to the living world principally, he did not pay a general attention to the works of the various masters, though they are, in my opinion, always of great use, even when the character of our subject requires us to depart from some of their principles. It cannot be denied that excellence in the department of the art which he professed may exist without them; that in such subjects, and in the manner that belongs to them, the want of them is supplied, and more than supplied, by natural sagacity, and a minute observation of particular Nature. If Gainsborough did not look at Nature with a poet's eye, it must be acknowledged that he saw her with the eye of a painter; and gave a faithful, if not a poetical, representation of what he had before him.

“Though he did not much attend to the works of the great historical painters of former ages, yet he was well aware that the language of the art—the art of imitation—must be learned somewhere; and as he knew that he could not learn it in an equal degree from his contemporaries, he very judiciously applied himself to the Flemish School, who are undoubtedly the greatest masters of one necessary branch of art; and he did not need to go out of his own country for examples of that school; from that he learnt the harmony of colouring, the management and disposition of light and shadow, and every means which the masters of it practised to ornament and give splendour to their works. And to satisfy himself, as well as others, how well he knew the mechanism and artifice which they employed to bring out that tone of colour which we so much admire in their works, he occasionally made copies from Rubens, Teniers, and Vandyck, which it would be no disgrace to the most accurate connoisseur to mistake, at the first sight, for the works of those masters. What he thus learned he applied to the originals of Nature, which he saw with his own eyes, and imitated, not in the manner of those masters, but in his own.

“Whether he most excelled in portraits, landscapes, or fancy-pictures, it is difficult to determine; whether his portraits were most admirable for exact truth of resemblance, or his landscapes for a portrait-like representation of Nature, such as we see in the works of Rubens, Ruysdaal, and others of those schools. In his fancy-pictures, when he had fixed on his object of imitation, whether it was the mean and



GRAND LANDSCAPE



CONTEMPORARY AND MODERN CRITICISM

vulgar form of a wood-cutter, or a child of an interesting character, as he did not attempt to raise the one, so neither did he lose any of the natural grace and elegance of the other; such a grace, and such an elegance as are more frequently found in cottages than in courts. This excellence was his own—the result of his particular observation and taste; for this he was certainly not indebted to the Flemish School, nor indeed to any school; for his grace was not academical or antique, but selected by himself from the great school of Nature; and there are yet a thousand modes of grace which are neither theirs nor his, but lie open in the multiplied scenes and figures of life, to be brought out by skilful and faithful observers."

It is indeed interesting to compare the judgment of a contemporary such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, who, in spite of all his acumen, could yet cling to the delusion that a true painter's eye could not be also that of a poet, with the criticism of such men as Constable, as Ruskin, and as Redgrave, or with the verdict of Brock-Arnold, Armstrong, and other moderns of the moderns, all, though in very varied degrees, endowed with the rare gift of true poetic insight into the secrets alike of Nature and of art.

Constable, that most faithful of all exponents of English scenery, the greatest, with the exception perhaps of Turner, of all the successors of Wilson and of Gainsborough, said of the Suffolk artist's landscapes: "The stillness of noon, the depths of twilight, and the dews and pearls of the morning, are all to be found on the canvases of this most benevolent and kind-hearted man. On looking at them we find tears in our eyes and know not what brings them, the lonely haunts of the solitary shepherd—the return of the rustic with his bill and bundle of wood—the darksome lane or dell, the sweet little cottage-girl at the spring with her pitcher—were the things he delighted to paint, and he painted them with exquisite refinement, yet a refinement not beyond Nature."

Ruskin, the ardent admirer of Turner, who, like Constable, was but just beginning his art-training when Gainsborough died, says of the diploma landscape at the Academy: "Nothing can be more attractively luminous or aerial than the distance of the Gainsborough, nothing more bold or inventive than the forms of the crags, the diffusion of the broad distant

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

light upon them, where a vulgar artist would have thrown them into dark contrast. But," adds this able critic, his words accentuating the fact that English landscape art was still in its infancy when Gainsborough died, "it will be found that the light of the distance is brought out by a violent exaggeration of the gloom in the valley; that the forms of the green trees which bear the chief light are careless and ineffective; that the markings of the crags are equally hasty; and that no object has realisation enough to enable the eye to rest upon it."

Again, referring to the same great early master, the skilful word-painter speaks of "his hand being as light as the sweep of a cloud, as swift as the flash of a sunbeam," and yet again he more fully dissects his excellence and his defects thus: "A great name his, whether in the English or any other school, the greatest colourist since Rubens, and the last I think of legitimate colourists—that is to say, of those who were fully acquainted with the use of their material—pure in his English feeling, profound in his seriousness, graceful in his gaiety, there are nevertheless certain deductions to be made from his worthiness which I dread to make, because my knowledge of his landscape works is not extensive enough to justify me in speaking of them decisively, but this is to be noted of all that I know, that they are rather motives of feeling and colour than earnest studies, that their execution is in some degree mannered and always hasty; that they are altogether wanting in affectionate detail, and that their colour is in some degree dependent on a bituminous and conventional green, which have more of science than of truth in them." This "more of science than of truth" is as noteworthy in its way as the distinction made by Reynolds between a poet's and an artist's eye, for it shows that even Ruskin had still something to learn, in that science and truth should be synonymous terms, not distinct qualities which are capable of being compared.

Redgrave, in his "Century of Painters," which in its way is nearly as valuable as Allan Cunningham's literary etchings, referring to the charm of Gainsborough's colouring, says: "There may be traced a lingering likeness in Gainsborough's landscapes to those of Rubens, but this arose more from his generalisation of details, his sinking of parts in the whole, than to any imitation of the great Fleming. It is like," he



*From the Mezzotint
by Charles Turner*

INTERIOR OF A COTTAGE



CONTEMPORARY AND MODERN CRITICISM

adds, "the recollection of some sweet melody which the musician weaves into his theme, all unconscious that it is a memory, and not a child of his own creation."

Brock-Arnold, criticising the critics, forcibly says: "Gainsborough felt the true charm of a landscape lay not in its details, but in its spirit, and he attempted to make his picture convey a similar general impression to the spectator to that which would be derived from a contemplation of the original scene."

It is noteworthy that whilst in Gainsborough's lifetime his landscapes hung unnoticed in the galleries leading to his painting-room, it is on them rather than on his portraits that modern critics chiefly dwell in their summaries of his special characteristics. Walter Armstrong, however, forms a remarkable exception to this rule; for in his able monograph on the artist he passes lightly over his claims as a landscape painter, but traces out with considerable care the gradual development of his style of portrait painting. He agrees with Brock-Arnold in ranking him with Reynolds; and with Tom Taylor, who was one of the few to recognise the dramatic excellence of some of his best portraits, in thinking him superior to Reynolds in his technique and in his management of the gradations of tone and colour. "Gainsborough's art," says Armstrong, after passing in review several of the great master's earlier portraits, "was all art. It was the pure spontaneous expression of a personality into which no anti-artistic leaven had been mixed. In his finest portraits of women he touches a height reached by no one else. The Mrs Siddons, the Mrs Beaufoy, . . . the Mrs Sheridan, are delicious melodies in colour, miracles of distinction, unrivalled records of the beauty of woman. No other painter has dazzled us with means so slight. Many of his most perfect things are at once superb in colour, and scarcely more than monochrome." In another passage this appreciative critic of Gainsborough as a portrait painter says that in London he gained a confidence in himself which he had not felt at Bath or at Ipswich; "his touch became more bold, his impasto richer, his colour more original in its combinations, and more personal. . . . A comparison," he adds, "between the Mrs Beaufoy and the Mrs Siddons casts a brilliant light upon the secret of Gainsborough's success, and indeed on the success of every portrait painter of first rank. Look at the Mrs Beaufoy, and

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

note how an airy, graceful *desinvolture* governs every line. There is nothing severe, nothing set, nothing big with possibilities in the whole conception. The sitter was a beautiful and happy woman, with no duties to the world beyond those of a wife and mother. And this notion breathes from every stroke of the painter's brush, the canvas is all gaiety, lightness, and life. Mrs Siddons, on the other hand, was a public institution. Her character had more than a touch of severity; her features had reflected superbly the passions of Lady Macbeth, but had failed with the adorable playfulness of Rosalind, . . . and Gainsborough instinctively perceived that a somewhat solemn flow of mass and line would afford a more coherent setting to her loveliness than the easy and more careless arrangement he chose for Mrs Beaufoy."

Gainsborough never yielded, as did his great rival Sir Joshua, to the temptation to merge the character of his sitter in that of some classic model whom he or she resembled not at all. He was too truly in touch with Nature, for in him, if ever in a portrait painter, truth and science were one. Whatever, indeed, may be the individual opinion of this or that self-constituted judge of Gainsborough, the fact remains that alike as a landscape and as a portrait painter, he ranks and ever will rank, amongst the immortals; he was an artist for all time, a genius whose place is with the greatest; a faithful realist, yet a genuine idealist; a true impressionist, yet a most careful worker; his fame will last as long as there are eyes to see and hearts to feel the beauty and poetry of natural scenery and of the human face divine, with insight enough into both to realise how great was Gainsborough's skill in their treatment. Methods and fashions in art may change, new secrets may be wrested from Nature, but Gainsborough will ever remain one of the few whose genius has set them above all transitory conditions.

INDEX

The names of Gainsborough's pictures are printed in italics.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Abel, Charles Frederick, Portrait of, 47, 48
 Abercrombie, Sir Ralph, 2
 <i>Abraham and Isaac</i>, 136
 Adam, the Brothers, 6
 Ajugari, Signora, 84
 Albany, Countess of, 78
 Alfieri, 78
 Allen, Grant, 5
 <i>Almack, William</i>, Portrait of, 118
 Angelo, Henry, 48, 93
 <i>Aremberg, Duke of</i>, 42, 136
 <i>Argyll, John, Duke of</i>, Portrait of, 67, 68
 Arkwright, 2
 Armstrong, Walter, 24, 27, 42, 141, 143
 Arne, 18
 Arnold, 18
 Arnold, <i>see</i> Brock-Arnold
 <i>Ashton, Dr</i>, Portrait of, 115
 Astley, John, 83</p> <p><i>Bacelli, Signora Giovanni</i>, Portrait of, 112
 Bach, Johann Christian, 87, 88
 <i>Baillie Family</i>, Portrait group, 119
 Baretti, 61
 Barrett, George, 73, 86
 Barry, 85, 105
 Bartolozzi, Francesco, 73, 136
 <i>Bate-Dudley, Sir Henry</i>, Portrait of, 111
 — <i>Lady</i>, Portrait of, 111
 Bateman, Viscount, 80, 92, 95, 122
 Bath, Residence in, 33-82
 Battoni, Pompeo, 139
 Beauclerk, 110
 Beaufort, Duke of, 44
 <i>Beaufoy, Mr and Mrs Henry</i>, Portraits of, 118, 143
 — <i>Mark</i>, Portrait of, 118
 Beaumont, Sir George, 92-95, 129
 Bedford, Duke of, 21
 Beechy, Sir William, 57
 Berkeley, Elizabeth, Countess Dowager of, 44
 Bewick, 6
 <i>Blackstone, Sir William</i>, Portrait of, 115
 <i>Blue Boy, The</i>, 67, 117</p> | <p>Boswell, 109
 Bouverie, Edward, 99
 <i>Boy at a Stile</i>, 48
 <i>Boys and Dogs</i>, 136
 <i>Boy's Head</i>, 74
 Boydell, Alderman, 23, 106
 Bradwell, 111
 Brindley, 2
 <i>Bristol, Marquis of</i> (Captain Hervey), Portrait of, 102
 Broadwood, Messrs, 49
 Brock-Arnold, 143
 Bruce, James, 85
 Brudenell, George (Earl of Cardigan), 69
 <i>Brunton, Miss Bessy</i>, Portrait of, 113
 <i>Buccleuch, Duchess of</i>, Portrait of, 69
 — <i>Henry Scott, Duke of</i>, Portrait of, 101
 <i>Buckinghamshire, Earl and Countess of</i>, Portrait of, 102
 Burch, Edward, 73
 <i>Burke, Edmund</i>, Portrait of, 104, 107
 — 6, 83, 107, 116, 129, 131, 133
 <i>Burlington, Lady</i>, Portrait of, 55
 Burney, Fanny (Madame D'Arblay), 35, 44, 50, 51, 54, 55, 64, 65, 84, 95, 101, 102, 109, 110, 112, 114, 132, 133
 — Dr, 50
 Burns, 3
 Burr, Margaret (Mrs Thomas Gainsborough), 20
 Burroughs, Rev. Humphrey, 11
 Bute, Countess of, 45
 <i>Buttall, Master Jonathan</i>, Portrait of (<i>The Blue Boy</i>), 117, 118</p> <p>Caermarthen, Lord, 101
 <i>Camden, Lord</i>, Portrait of, 81
 Cameron, Dr, 92
 <i>Campbell, Lord Frederick</i>, Portrait of, 68
 Canaletto, 3
 <i>Canning, George</i>, Portrait of, 104, 108
 Cardigan, Earl of, 69
 <i>Carnarvon, Henry Herbert, Earl of</i>, Portrait of, 102
 Caroline, Queen, 130</p> |
|---|--|

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

- Catherine, Empress, 85
 Chamberlain, Mason, 73
 Chambers, Sir William, 70, 71, 73, 136
 Chardin, 4
 Charles II., King, 7
 Charles VI., Emperor, 1
Charlotte, Queen, Portrait of, 95, 96
 — 50, 100, 128, 130
 Chatham, Earl of (William Pitt), 1
 Chatterton, 3
 Cheriton, Lord, 101
Chesterfield, Lord, Portrait of, 75
 Chippendale, 6
Christie, James, Portrait of, 118
Chubb, Mr, Portrait of, 27, 28
 Cipriani, Agostino, 73
 Clare, Lord, *see* Nugent, Mr
Clarges, Lady, Portrait of, 108
 Clarke, Captain, 29
 Clarkson, 3
 Clive, Kitty, 112
Clive, Robert, Lord, Portrait of, 104, 107
 Coates, 75
 Colla, 84
Colman, George, Portrait of, 110
 — 51, 87, 105
Conspirators, The, 136
 Constable, 10, 22, 141
Conway, General, Portrait of, 116
 — Hon. H. S., 49
 Cook, Captain, 85, 116
Cornard Wood, The, 22, 23
 Cornaro Family, Portrait group, 136
 Correggio, 125, 139
 Cosway, Richard, 73
Cottage Children, 80
Cottage Door, The, 80
Cottage Girl, The, 81
Cottage Girl with her Dog and Pitcher, 123
Cottage, Interior of a, 142
Cottager, A Little, 138
 Cotes, Francis, 136
 Cotton, Charles, 73
 Cowper, 3
 Coyle, Rev. Mr, 12
 Coyte, George, 113
 Crabbe, 105
 Crewe, Mrs, 65
 Crisp, Mr, 54, 55
Cumberland, Duchess of, Portraits of, 76, 100, 136
 — *Duke of*, Portraits of, 76, 97, 136
 — 61, 67, 68, 100
 Cunningham, Allan, 20, 40, 102, 124, 128, 129.
 D'Arblay, General, 65
 D'Arblay, Mme., *see* Burney, Fanny
 Dalton, Richard, 74
 Dancer, 75
 Darwin, 4
 Dashwood, Sir Francis, 81
 David, 4
 Davy, 2
Dehane, Mr and Mrs, Portrait of, 82
 Delany, Mrs, 48
Derby, Edward Stanhope, Earl of, Portrait of, 101
Devonshire, Duchess of, Portrait of, 63, 102
 — 41, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 99, 130
 — William, Duke of, 64
 Dover, Lord, 45
 Duncan, Lord, 2
 Dupont, Gainsborough, 10, 66, 96, 122, 134, 136.
Eden, Dorothea, Lady, Portrait of, 72
 Edgar, Mr, 27, 28.
 Egremont, Countess of, 102.
Elliott, Mrs Grace, Portrait of, 78, 81
Ellis, Hon. Welbore, Portrait of, 90
 Erskine, Lord, 31
Fane, Mrs, Portrait of, 119
Ferns, Garnett, Bishop of, Portrait of, 115
 Ferrers, Lawrence, Earl of, 69
 Fielding, 3
 Fischer, Johann Christian, 47, 49, 50, 82, 87, 88, 90, 91
 — *Mrs (Mary Gainsborough)* Portraits of, 66
 — 91, 124, 134
 Fitzherbert, Mrs, 98-100, 122
Folkestone, Jacob, Viscount, Portrait of, 75
Foote, Samuel, Portrait of, 47, 58
 — 56, 58, 59
 Forest, 23
Fox, Charles James, Portrait of, 104, 106
 — 65, 83, 100, 107, 108, 116, 131, 132
Fox hunt, 136
 Fragonard, 126
Franklin, Dr, Portrait of, 108
 — 73, 107, 108, 112
Freston Tower, 25
 Frith, W. P., 67
 Fulcher, 15, 30, 31, 111, 113
 Gabrielli, Signora, 84
Gage, Lord and Lady, Portraits of, 102, 103
 Gainsborough, Mr and Mrs (Parents of Thomas Gainsborough), 78
 — Elizabeth (Mrs Bird), 10
 — *Humphrey*, Portrait of, 9, 87, 89
 — *John*, Portrait of, 8-10, 88

INDEX

Gainsborough, Margaret (Wife of Thomas Gainsborough, *née* Burr), 21, 24, 31-33, 37, 89-91, 122, 124, 134, 136
 — Margaret, 66, 128, 136
 — Mary, *see* Gibbon, Mrs
 — Mary (Mrs Fischer), 49, 66, 82, 87, 90, 91, 124, 134
 — Matthias, 10
 — *Nephew of* (as a "Blue Boy"), 68
 — Robert, 10
 — Sarah (Mrs Dupont), 10
 — Susannah (Mrs Gardiner), 10, 67
 — *Thomas and Wife*, Portrait group, 67
 — *Wife and Daughters*, Portraits of, 67
 — *Two Daughters*, Portraits of, 28, 66, 67
 Gainsborough, Lord, 121
 Gardiner, Edward, Portrait of, 67
 — Rev. Edward, 10, 15, 67, 128
 Garnett, John, Bishop of Ferns, Portrait of, 115
 Garrick, David, 46, 47, 50, 51, 54-57, 61, 74, 75, 87, 110
 George I., King, 92, 93
 George III., King, Portraits of, 94, 95, 96
 — 1, 2, 25, 50, 71-73, 80, 85, 97, 100
 Giardini, Felice di, 47-50
 Gibbon, Mrs (Mary Gainsborough), 10, 89, 90, 127, 134
 Gibbs, 29
 Gipsies, 81
 Girl and Pigs, 121
 Gloucester, Duchess of, Portraits of, 100, *see* Waldegrave, Countess of
 Going to Market, 80
 Goldsmith, Oliver, 3, 44, 48, 61, 73, 74, 81, 84
 Good Shepherd, *The*, 136
 Goya, 4
 Grafton, Duke of, 46
 Grahame, Hon. Mrs, Portrait of, 114
 Gravelot, 15
 Graves, Henry, & Son, 111
 — Rev. Richard, Portrait of, 115
 Gray, 3, 56
 Green, Thomas, 20
 Grenville, George, 69
 Greuze, 4
 Grey, Lord, 131
 Grosvenor, Earl of, 68, 118
 — Lady, Portrait of, 67
 — — 68, 76
 Guardi, 3
 Guercino, 139
 Hamilton, Colonel, 48, 127
 — Lady (Emma Harte), Portrait of, 118

Handel, 18
 Harbord, Sir Harbord, Portrait of, 103
 Harvest Waggon, *The*, 66, 67
 Hastings, Warren, 107, 129-133
 Hayman, Francis, 16, 17, 43, 73, 83
 Hazlitt, 57
 Heathcote, Mrs, 90
 Heberden, Dr, 134
 Hen and Chickens, 67
 Henderson, John, Portrait of, 60
 — 47, 50, 59
 Hertford, Duke of, 68
 Hervey, Captain (Earl of Bristol), Portrait of, 68
 — Lady, 63
 Hill, Jack, Portrait of, 124
 Hingston, Rev. Mr, Wife and Son, Portraits of, 26
 — 28
 Hogarth, 5, 15, 44, 55, 62, 85
 Holland, Lord, 99, 106, 108
 Honeywood, General, Portrait of, 62
 — 116
 Hood, Samuel, Viscount, Portrait of, 65, 115
 Hoppner, 118
 Horton, Mrs, 67, 68, 76, 100
 Howard, 3
 Howe, Admiral, Portrait of, 116
 Hudson, 75, 83
 Hume, David, 46
 Humphry, Onias, 51
 Hunter, Mr John, 134
 — William, M.D., 73
 Hurd, Richard (Bishop of Worcester), Portrait of, 115
 Ipswich, 3, 24-28, 33
 Jackson, William, 11, 47
 Johnson, Dr Samuel, Portrait of, 109
 — 3, 31, 44, 48, 55, 59, 61, 62, 73, 81, 84, 108, 112
 Jones, Inigo, 36
 Kalfs, William, 4
 Kauffman, Angelica, 73, 76, 95
 Kauzzini, 84
 Keppel, Admiral, 102
 — Lady Elizabeth, 62
 Kew (buried at), 135
 Kilderbee, Mr, 26, 120, 134
 Kilmorey, Viscount, 81
 Kirby, Joshua, 25, 30, 71-73, 136
 Lad with a Whip, 22
 Ladies walking in the Mall, St James' Park, 125

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

- Lady and Child*, 75
Lakes, The (visit to), 120
Lancete, 126
Landguard Fort, 29, 32
Landscape, "Repose," 122
 — *a Large*, 74
 — *"Evening,"* 122
 — *Grand*, 40
 — *Drawings of*, 16, 18, 20
 — *with Cattle and Figures*, 67
 — *with Figures against a Tree*, 81
 — *with Horses ploughing*, 81
Lane, Mr, 121
Langton, Mr and Mrs, Portraits of, 119
Lansdowne, William Petty, Marquis of,
 Portrait of, 101
Lawrence, 118
Lees, Mr C. E., 53
Lennox, Lady Sarah, 96
Leslie, Mr, 53, 100
Lightfoot, Hannah, 96
Ligonier, Lady, in fancy dress, Portrait of,
 76, 78
 — *Lord, on horseback*, Portrait of, 44,
 76-78
Linley, Eliza (Mrs Sheridan), Portraits of,
 47, 50, 51, 53
 — 51-54
 — *Samuel, R.N.*, Portrait of, 50
 — *Thomas*, 50, 53, 136
Long, Mr, 51, 59
Loutherbourg, Philip de, Portrait of, 113
 — 86
Luttrell, Colonel, 76, 81

Macaulay, Mrs Catherine, Portrait of, 81
M^r Millan, Mrs Buchanan, Portrait of, 88
Mair, Henry, 112
Major, Mr, 33
Man's Head, A, 136
Mar, Countess of, 45
Maretti, Carlo, 137
Market Cart, The, 66
Marlborough, Duke of, 58, 63
Matthews, Captain, 52
Maynard, Lady (Pancy Parsons), Portrait
 of, 103
Medlicott, Mr, 62
Mengs, Raphael, 4
Merlin, Portrait of, 49, 118
Meyer, Jeremiah, 73
Mills, 29
Molyneux, Lady, Portrait of, 74
Montagu, Duke and Duchess of, Portraits
 of, 68, 69
 — *Edward Wortley*, 45
 — *Lady Mary Wortley*, Portrait of, 45
 — — 31, 93

Montagu, Mrs, 35
Moodey, Mrs, and her Children, Portrait
 of, 84
Moore, Sir John, 2
More, Hannah, 55
Morland, George, 86
Moser, George, 72, 73, 75
 — *Mary*, 75
Mountmorres, Viscount, Portrait of, 86
Mulgrave, Earl of, Portrait of, 102
 — *Lady*, Portrait of, *Frontispiece*
Murphy, Arthur, 110, 112
Mushroom Girl, 122
Musical Club, Portrait group of, 28
Musidora washing her Feet, 125
Myers, 136

Nash, Richard (Beau Nash), 36, 45
Needham, Captain, Portrait of, 68
Nesbit, Mr, 118
Newsham, Mrs, 44
Newton, Francis, 73
Nollekens, Joseph, 48, 73
Norfolk, Bernard Edward, Duke of,
 Portrait of, 101
 — *Charles Howard, Duke of*, Portrait
 of, 101
North, Lord, 2, 83, 84, 106, 107
Northcote, 121, 126
Northumberland, Duke of, Portrait of, 102
Nugent, Colonel, Portrait of, 62
 — *Dr*, 105
 — *Mr (Lord Clare)*, Portrait of, 43, 44,
 45
Nuthall, Mr, 76, 78

Ogle, Miss, 107
Omhah, 85, 101
Onslow, Lord, 99
Orloff, Prince, 85
Orpin, Portrait of, 42, 57

Pacchierotti, Signor, 84
Pack-Horse Bridge, The, 81
Palmer, General, 47
 — *Offy*, 105
 — *John, M.P.*, Portrait of, 104
Parish Clerk, 42, 66
Parsons, Captain, 85
 — *Nancy (Lady Maynard)*, Portrait of,
 103
Peasant and his Family outside a Cottage
 Door, 136
Pearce, Mr and Miss, 120, 134
Pembroke Family, Portrait group, 42, 136
Pennant, Thomas, Portrait of, 100
Penny, Edward, 72, 73
Perrin, Judge, Portrait of, 115

INDEX

"Peter Pindar" (Dr Wolcot), 113
 Peter III., 85
 Pierrepont, Evelyn (Earl of Kingston), 45
 Piozzi, Mrs, *see* Thrale, Mrs
 Pitt, George, 74
 — William (Earl of Chatham), Portraits of, 104,
 — 105-107
 Plunkett, Lady Emilia, 44
 Pond, Mr and Mrs, Portraits of, 27
 Pope, Alexander, 84
 Portland, Duke of, 46
 Poyntz, Right Hon. Stephen, 61, 62
 — William, 61
Pratt, Mr Charles (Lord Camden), Portrait of, 81
Princesses, Three, Portraits of, 95, 97
Princesses, Royal, Portraits of, 92
 Pym, Mrs, 33

 Quin, James, 17, 47, 54

 Radnor, Lord, 98
 Raeburn, 5
 Ramsay, Allan, 5, 10, 85, 95
 Raphael, 125
 Ray, Lady, 42
 Redgrave, 141
 Rembrandt, 136
 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 5, 6, 10, 41, 43, 46,
 51, 53, 61-63, 65, 73, 79, 83, 85-87,
 93, 95, 100, 105, 110, 113, 117, 118,
 121, 125, 133, 135, 136, 137-141, 143
 Richards, John, 73
Richardson, Samuel, Portrait of, 45
Richmond and Lennox, Duke of, Portrait of, 136
 Richmond, Summer visits to, 124, 134
Roberts, Captain, Portrait of, 116
 Robinson, Mrs, 97, 98
Rodney, Lord, Portrait of, 116
 Romney, Lord, 5, 10, 75, 85, 95, 113
 Rowlandson, 65
 Royal Family, Portrait group of, 95
 Rubens, 140
Rural Courtship, 67
 Ruskin, 141, 142
 Russell, Watt, 23
Rutland, Charles, Duke of, Portrait of, 101
 Ruysdaal, 140

 Sacchi, Andrea, 137
 Sackville, Lord George, Portrait of, 103
St Leger, Colonel, Portrait of, 116, 121
 — 117
 Salusbury, Miss (Mrs Thrale), 44
 Sandby, Paul, 73, 136
 — Thomas, 73

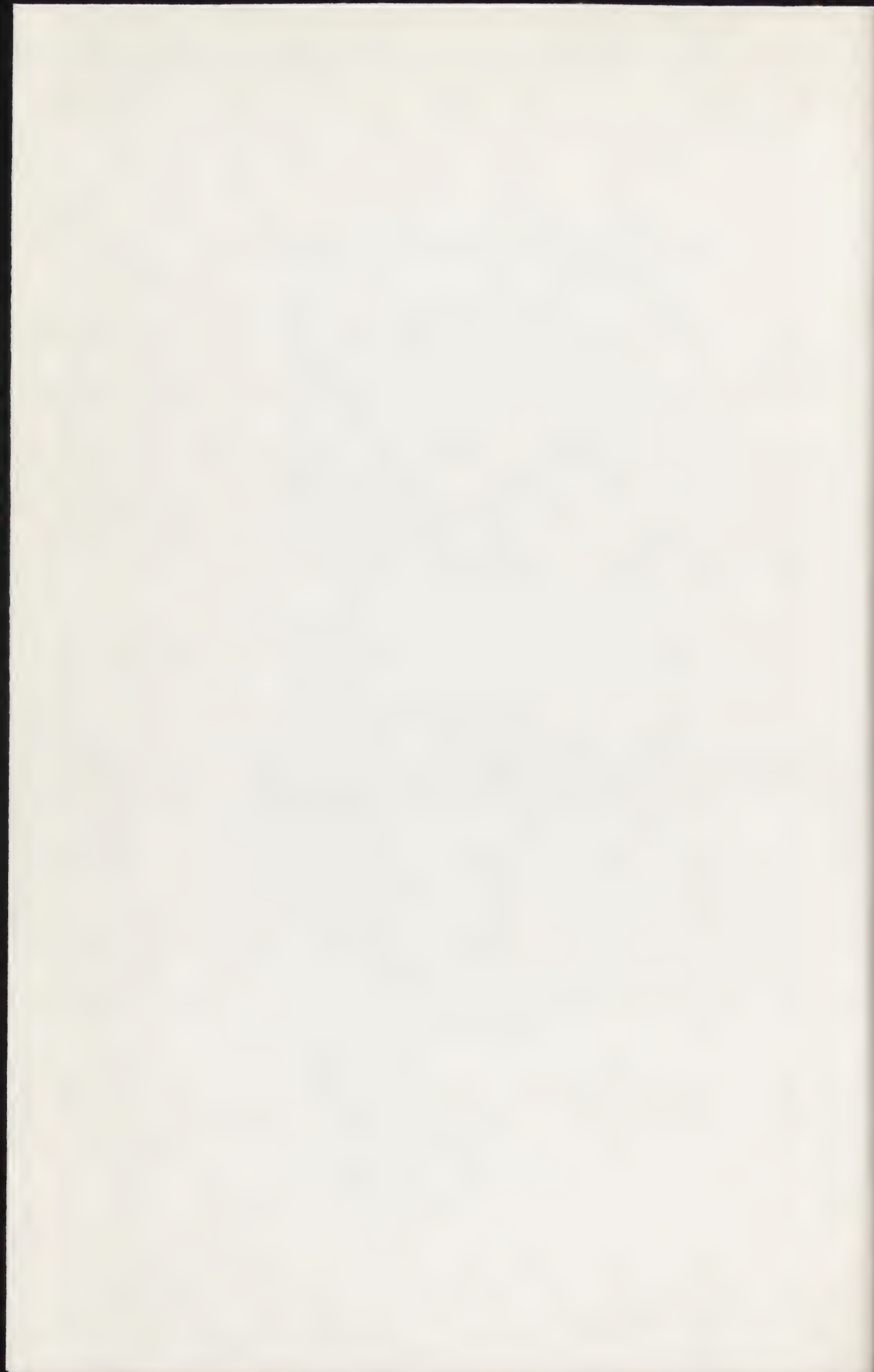
Sand-getters, The, 81
Sandwich, Lord, Portrait of, 102
 Schegel, E. von, 4
Schomberg, Dr Ralph, Portrait of, 119
 Seymour, Lord Hugh, 101
 Sharp, 3
 Sharpe & Cox, 118
Shepherd Boy in a Shower, 120, 124
 Sheridan, Elizabeth, 51
 — *Mrs (Eliza Linley)*, Portraits of, 47,
 50, 51, 53, 107.
 — 84, 130
 — *and Mrs Tickell*, Portrait of, 52
 — Richard Brinsley, Portraits of, 106,
 107
 — 50-53, 84, 87, 98, 100, 104,
 129, 131-133, 135, 136, 143
 Shield, 18
Siddons, Mrs, Portrait of, 111, 143
 — 112, 130
 Simon, Peter, 121
Skinner, Sir John, Portrait of, 115
 Smeaton, 2
 Southampton, Lord, 99
Spencer, Earl, Portrait of, 63
 — *Margaret Georgiana, Countess of*,
 Portrait of, 62
 — 61, 65
 Stanhope, Philip Dormer (Earl of Chester-
 field), 75
 Steevens, 31
 Stephens, F. G., 20
Sterne, Laurence, Portrait of, 44-46
 Stourton, Lord, 99
 Strutt, Mr, 28
 Sudbury, 1, 7, 10, 18, 21, 24, 122
 Sullivan, 132
 Summer, 132
Sussex, Lady, and Child, Portraits of, 76,
 77
 Swift, Dean, 3

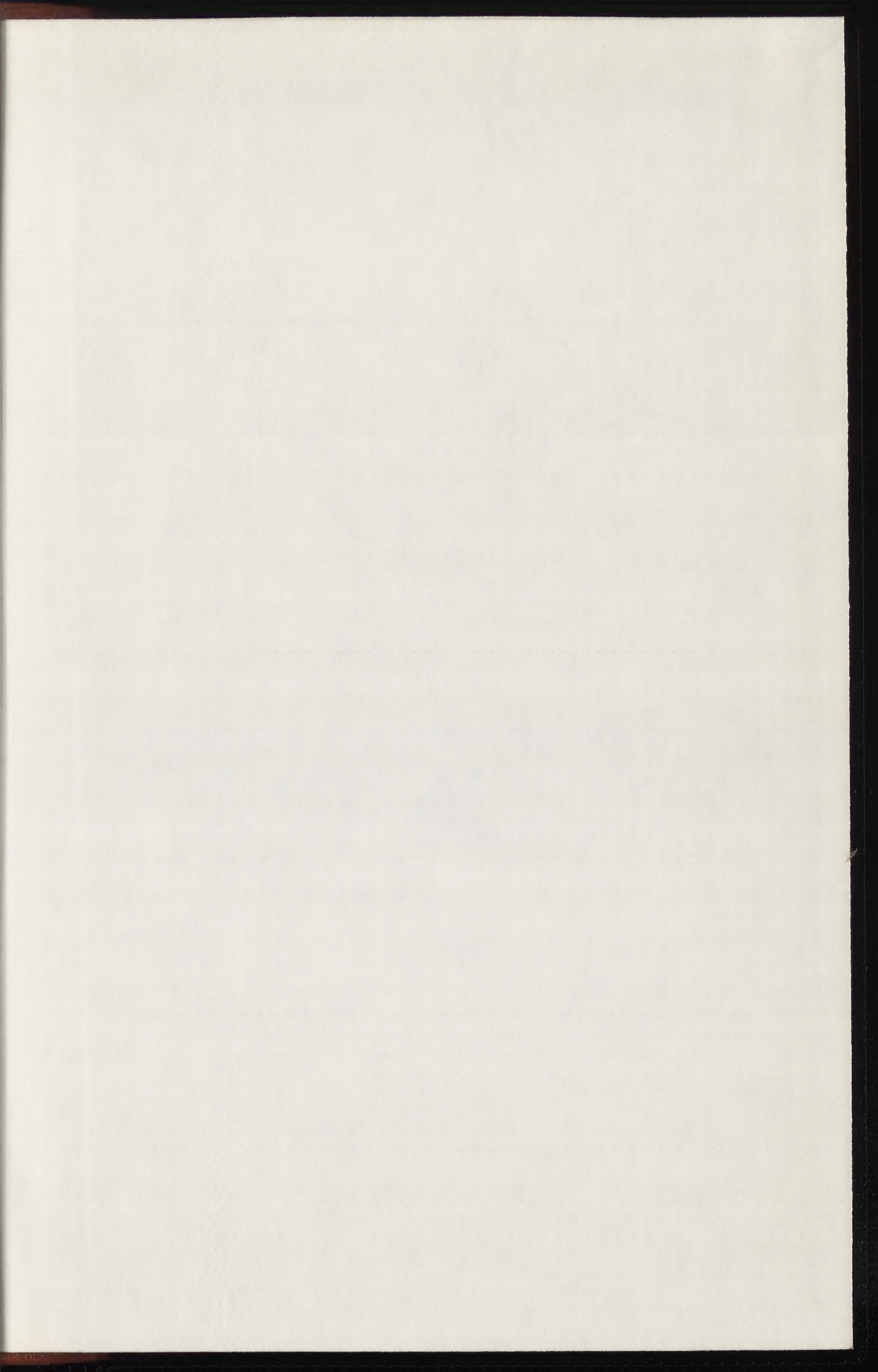
Tarleton, Colonel, Portrait of, 116
 Taylor, Tom, 143
 Teniers, 140
Thicknesse, Mrs, Portrait of, 38-41
 — Philip, 29-33, 37-41, 92, 95, 127
 Thornhill, Sir James, 15
 Thrale, Mrs (*née* Salusbury, afterwards Mrs
 Piozzi), 35, 44, 55, 109, 110
 Thurlow, Lord, 31
Tickell, Mrs, and Eliza Linley, Portraits of, 53
 Tims, Peter, 73
 Titian, 125, 136, 139, 140
Tom Peartree, 12, 29
 Trimmer, 136
 — Mrs, 25

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

- Trueman, Sir Benjamin, 90
 Turner, 44, 141
Two Boys, 136
 Tyler, Miss, 81
 — William, 73
- Vandyck, 4, 41, 42, 136, 140
 Van Huysum, 4
 Velasquez, 4, 136
 Vernon, Admiral, 30
 — Lady Harriet, 68
Vernon, Mr., Portrait of, 67
 Vestris, M., 118
View in the Mall, St James' Park, 26
View, St James' Park, 136
 Violante, Eva Maria (Mrs Garrick), 55
- Waldegrave, Countess of (Duchess of Gloucester), Portraits of, 44, 62, 100
Wade, Captain, Portrait of, 76
 — Samuel, 73
 Wales, George, Prince of, Portrait of, 97, 98
 — Mrs Fitzherbert, Sheridan, and Lord Radnor, Portrait group, 98
 — 98-100, 106, 107, 116, 118, 121
 Wallace, 4
 Walpole, Horace, 45, 48, 68, 86, 93, 98, 111, 116, 117, 122, 126
 — Sir Robert, 1
Watering Place, The, 124
 Watering Places, 66
Watson, Hon. Mrs., Portrait of, 118
 Watteau, 4, 126
 Watt, 2
 Weenix, Jan, 4
 Wellington, 2
 Wesley, 3
West, Sir Benjamin, Portrait of, 113
 — 70-73, 78-80, 85, 95, 106, 128, 136
- Westminster, Richard Grosvenor, Marquis of, 101
Whitehead, Paul, Portrait of, 110
 Whitefield, 3
 Wilberforce, 3
 Wilkes, John, 62, 81, 83
Willes, Lord Chief Baron, Portrait of, 115
 Wilson, Richard, 5, 6, 10, 13, 44, 70, 73, 75, 85, 86, 141
 Wilson, Joseph, 72, 73
 Wiltshire, Mr, 66, 82
 Wolcot, Dr ("Peter Pindar"), 113, 116, 121, 122
Wolfe, General James, Portrait of, 33
 Wood, Sir Jasper, 28, 29
Wood Scene near Corfe, 81
Woodman and his Dog in a Storm, 136
Woodman in the Storm, 121
Worcester, Hurd, Bishop of, Portrait of, 115
 Worcestershire, Visit to, 120
 Wright of Derby, 5, 10
 Wynant, 22
Wyndham, William, Portrait of, 104
 — 108, 131-133
- Yates, Mrs.*, Portrait of, 112, 113
 — Richard, 112
 Yelverton, Lady Barbara, 76
 Yeo, Richard, 73
 York, Frederick, Duke of, 96
Young Gentleman, Portrait of a, 75
Young Girl, Portrait of a, 28
- Zuccarelli, Francesco, 73
 Zuccherelli, 4
 Zoffany, John, 73, 76, 80
 — *Portrait of Gainsborough*, 1







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